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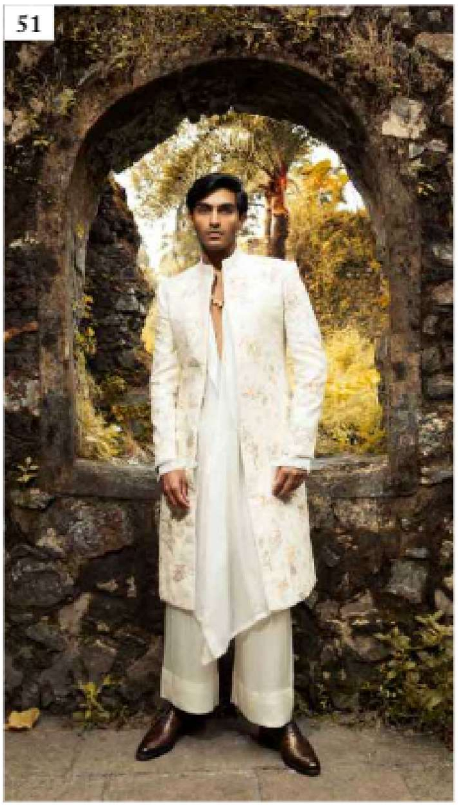

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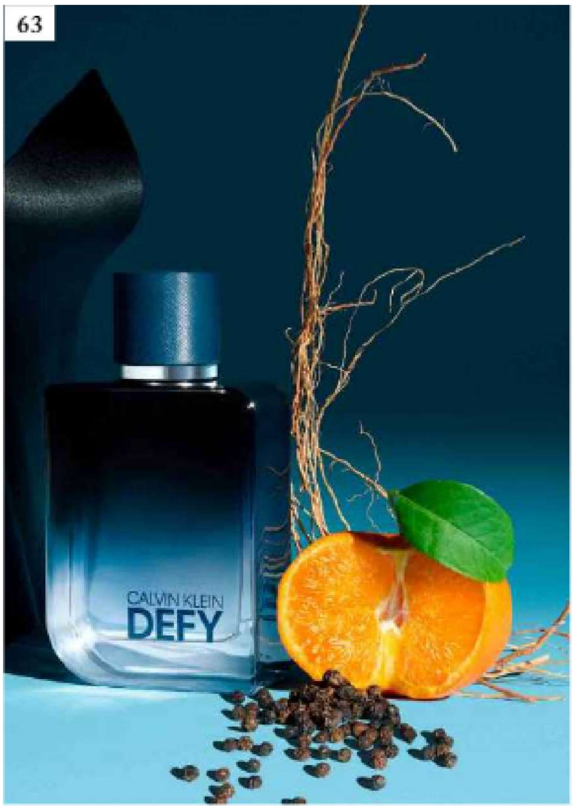

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ON THE COVER

PHOTO COURTESY: GETTY IMAGES

Editor's Note

The world's biggest single-sport extravaganza will get going in Qatar in the coming weeks. The FIFA World Cup 2022 will have much of the world glued to their TV sets for four weeks starting November 20. And as we have done in the past, for five World Cups since 2002, we offer you a comprehensive curtain raiser in this issue.

2002 was coincidentally also the last year in which a South American team won the world title. So we kick off the section with the question on everyone's mind: Can France retain the Cup, or will Argentina or Brazil succeed in breaking the two decade jinx and take it to South America? To put it differently, which of the two smiling superstars on the cover of this issue will still be grinning at the end of four weeks, or will it be someone else? We also look at the 10 players to watch out for, including the likes of Messi and Ronaldo, for whom the 2022 World Cup will be the last. Will they be able to finally get their hands on the Jules Rimet trophy?

The wedding season this year is back with a bigger bang, given the last two years were spent in uncertainty. We catch the pulse of what's been happening with three features: how did Ali Fazal and Richa Chadha pull off an eco-friendly wedding? What even is an eco-friendly wedding? And what is this new trend of mindfulness among those getting married? The changing nature of groomswear is also a conversation worth having, and we got fashion industry insiders to give us the lowdown on groomswear this year. Yet another feature explores the luxury options for couples to continue with their celebrations after their big day.

Fitness and adventure sports are well represented in this issue. Basis a book that details the indispensability of the sherpas when it comes to mountaineering in the Himalayas, we take a peek into the world's greatest climbing community and their achievements over the last seven decades. Another story delves into the little-known sport of surf fishing, as Indian angling fans gather on a remote Maharashtra beach later this month to take part in an annual competition. Fitness comes in many forms, and bouldering is an outdoor sport that many are taking to these days, as our writer explains in a piece in the issue.

Scorpio-N, the latest iteration of the best selling SUV from the Mahindras, has a waiting list that stretches into two years. Our writer spent some time with the vehicle to provide us the reasons why people are willing to wait despite so many alternate options in the market. In cinema profiles, we check out talented powerhouses like Pan Nalin and Tillotama Shome. And in the watches section, we take a look at some of exceptional timepieces that were launched in 2022.

Hope you enjoy the issue.

— Radhakrishnan Nair

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"I've learned not to take time for granted. What drives me is knowing that the clock is ticking."

Ryan Gosling

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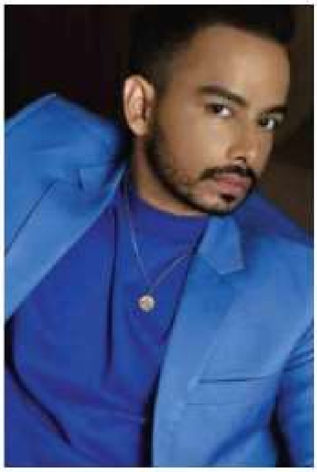

MANISH MISHRA

In this issue: What Maketh The Fashion Of The New Age Groom (Pg 60)

One language you'd like to learn?
Italian

The most unique job that should exist?
Someone to make excuses for my sloppiness

Your last impulsive purchase?
A Gucci bag

A wardrobe essential for men?
A crisp, well-tailored white shirt

What Maketh The Fashion Of The New Age Groom

6 Reasons Why Mahindra Scorpio-N Is Worth The Two-Year Waiting Period

AFZAL RAWUTHER

In this issue: Mahindra Scorpio-N (Pg 40)

One language you'd like to learn?
French

The most unique job that should exist?
Shot-gun road tester

A car that you think is underrated?
Volvo XC60

A luxury car brand you wish you owned?
Pagani

MAGANDEEP SINGH

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One language you'd like to learn?
Japanese

The most unique job that should exist?
Rejecting proposed scientific/ environmental studies with "we told you so"

The first thing you notice about a person?
Their aura

Your current favourite perfume?
Baccarat Rouge 540

RADHIKA AGRAWAL

In this issue: On the rocks (Pg 22)

One language you'd like to learn?
Horse whispering

The most unique job that should exist?
A motherly human alarm clock

One fitness myth you believed for the longest time?
Having abs is the end-all be-all of fitness

A quick hair care hack that men should know?
Spray on some dry shampoo on days you're ditching the shower

RADAR

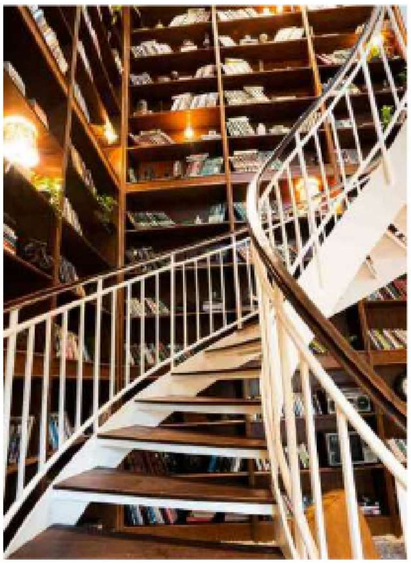
WHO & WHAT YOU SHOULD BE CHECKING OUT THIS MONTH

Curated by Samreen Tungekar

Actor

SRISHTI SHRIVASTAVA

Theatre-goers will agree with me when I say that Srishti Shrivastava is one of the most talented and busy actors on the Mumbai theatre circuit today. While we saw her fighting Alia Bhatt's Safina in *Gully Boy* before a proper debut as Ayushmann Khurrana's sister in *Gulabo Sitabo*, Shrivastava has been a part of major theatre productions in the past few years, and had also won Best Supporting Actor award at META in 2018 for *Shikhandi*. Her popularity on screens commenced with her role in *Girliyapa* on YouTube, and her recent outing in the Madhuri Dixit-starrer *Maja Ma* (Amazon Prime Video), makes her a fresh face to count on for meatier roles in the ever-evolving streaming platform space. Watching out for you, Shrivastava.



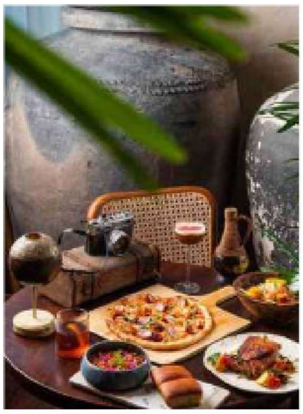
Eat & Drink

EVE, BOMBAY

Restaurants are opening up by the bucket and it's hard to keep up, that's why I'm out there, filtering, so that you don't have to. In place of what was once Indigo Deli, Powai now has Eve — a resto-bar that's meant to be a creative space for people to come together over meals, coffee, or a cocktail. A vintage doorway welcomes you in and leads you to a 30 ft library staircase, high ceilings adorned with books. The idea is to create an extension of your living room — so you'll find comfortable couches, formal nuclear dining tables, an island bar, cane-weaved seating, and cute little corners. In keeping with this homely feel, the menu is cuisine-agnostic — I had some European appetisers before crawling into my comfort zone with Asian, but let's start with some cocktails first. Soulful for the gin lover is the Treasure of France: a rather sippable gin cocktail with vanilla, passion fruit, citrus, sparkling wine, and some Darjeeling tea, which produces a rather bittersweet and light taste. If you're in the mood to tequila it up, try the El Dove, with tequila, agave, jalapenos, and bird eye chilli — a sweet and spicy punchy poison. Pair these craft cocktails with some usual and unusual appetisers — the easiest choice for the fussiest person on your table would be the hot chicken poppers. A special appetiser that's a must-try is the Eve's Cranberry & Brie Phyllo Cup, made of thin, flaky pastry cups filled with softened, buttered brie, maraschino cherries, cranberries, with some berry compote. Indulgent AF, and a sweet twist in the middle of a meal. For the mains, pick from an assortment of pizzas, Asian lovers can try the edamame blue pea rice and some prawns, or a pan seared salmon with citrus sauce. P.S: This is a resto-bar with a bakery counter, so a coffee-croissant date with their in-house baked goodies is a possibility too.

ONE8 COMMUNE, MUMBAI

Virat Kohli's much awaited One8 Commune has made its way to Mumbai, and the buzz is real. Nestled in the late Kishore Kumar's Juhu bungalow, the concept is to create a 'community' for everyone to sit, chill, eat, and drink at. A neutral colour palette, with flooring retained from the original bungalow, different seating areas of the place are defined differently — case in point — the semi-private dining area that has a warm embrace like a parlour — meant for an intimate party of five, while the outside seating is meant for a rather casual, quick hangout. My overall experience says it's suited best for small bites and cocktails, and there's plenty to choose from there. Start with the Lavender Gimlet, a gin cocktail that's essentially a gin cocktail with a lavender twist, so slightly tangy, really light, and easy to drink. Old-fashioned enthusiasts can try the Banana Old Fashioned, which has a banana aftertaste and is a good sipping cocktail with your meal. On the food menu is a section called Virat's Favourites, featuring Kohli's personal favourite dishes, and the heart wants to experiment then. I don't eat my meals without a salad, so the Superfood Salad, with assorted greens, amaranth, cantaloupe, and roasted pumpkin seeds is an easy choice, followed by my favourite dish of this meal: the mushroom googly dimsums, with soft wild mushrooms, cream cheese, and truffle oil. Light, flavourful, and a must-try. The avocado flatbread with corn butter jalapeno and truffle oil is a bestseller here, so try that next, and follow it up with some prawn aj ajillo with sourdough. The menu is extensive, and includes almost everyone's tastes, so order freely, you'll lap it all up in no time.



Travel

A WEEKEND AT WOODS AT SASAN, GIR

I'll start by saying this: if you're burnt out in the city, and have overdone the beaches, nothing can do for you what a wildlife wellness experience can. Immersive experiences are the need of the hour, and situated in the Gir forest of Gujarat, Woods At Sasan, a modern retreat, offers just that.

Nestled in 16 acres of mango orchard and lush forest, the focus of this place is to bring your focus back on what matters the most: wellbeing. Eco-conscious architecture welcomes you into a space with greenery, lush gardens, and closer to nature — you're literally in a forest. From a villa to a studio room, each independent space has its own private garden where you can sip your morning tea, indulge in some reflection, and enjoy the quiet. Open showers, luxurious bathtubs with sunlight pouring in, the rooms are comfortable, and peaceful.

A weekend of nutrition, ayurvedic treatments, nature expeditions, and curated experiences guided by wellbeing practitioners is what you're signing up for here. Meals can be served with a side of internet, but pick their sattvic experiences — for breakfast, you'll nibble your healthies in the middle of a garden while a flutist plays some fresh melodies, making sure your day starts on a positive note. Dinner, too, can be had under the stars — a special sattvic dinner with candle light and hearth fire flicker as you experience a sense of calm, mindfully eating your meal, no blue light rays interfering.

Sasan Gir is home to the last of the Asiatic lions of the world, as well as some of the most exotic flora and fauna. An open jeep ride with a personal guide takes you through the carefully curated paths of the forest to witness nature in its truest form — and if you're lucky, you'll spot a lion or two. I spotted one within 15 minutes of my safari, and it was mesmerising to observe, hard to take my eyes off.

Ever wondered what it's like in the jungle at night? As moonlight covers the world like a blanket and leaves rustle, the retreat takes you on an immersive night ride in an open gypsy, where you can experience the quiet. Cool winds wrap around you as you drive 10 kms to reach the corner of the lake, turn the headlights off, only the lights from the fireflies flickering around you, as you hope to spot a nocturnal animal, or hear the roar of a lion. A cup of chai with some cookies while you sit still and just experience the night. Call me philosophical, but it changes something within you.

After the wildlife and night ride excitement, spend your second day in bliss at the spa, which is not just for traditional massages, but has treatment programs for more consistent wellness — their yoga practitioners will teach you yoga nidra, meditation, and other techniques that'll help you tap that inner self, and really detox from the chaos in your head. The evening can be spent at a sundowner where, with some lemongrass tea, you learn about your circadian rhythm through a grounding session as you walk a path of stones to understand your pressure points — the holistic practitioner personally guides you through this.

From a Gujarati thali experience to an all-in-all under-the-stars barbecue to a meditative state of mind, wellness experiences meant to calm you, blended with the thrill of adventure with safaris and animal spotting — if you want a few days of newer things than just gramworthy staycations, Woods At Sasan will tick all boxes.

HAVE FUN. SERIOUSLY!

There are only a few moments in life that enrich your outlook on everything and riding a motorcycle would top the list. Biking is not just an experience but a way of life, and those who have ridden through life's journeys aboard two-wheels will swear by their experiences. Owning a KTM gives the rider access to such experiences through KTM Pro-XP.

KTM Pro-XP aims at delivering an unparalleled riding experience, not just for the ardent and die-hard bikers, but also for those who seek escape from the mundane and to add a dash of excitement into their lives.

With KTM Pro-XP, your options are not just limited to touring. If you aren't ready yet to saddle up for a long adventurous tour, then you've got a plethora of options such as Academy, Trails, Power rides, Pro-Getaways, Urban Escapes, and Track days to tickle the Pro-Biker in you. Now that's a long list of options to choose from.

So, which one of these experiences would be ideal for a passionate biker such as you?
We hear you ask. Let's look at what **KTM Pro-XP** has on offer, shall we?

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Adventure Trails

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Power Rides

Power packed 4 day rides that are ideal for adrenaline junkies who want more. These rides deliver the perfect blend of thrill and skill, so there's never a dull moment.

Pro-Getaways

Adrenaline-packed moments on tarmac, for a perfect weekend. These weekend rides are perfect for those seeking a weekend getaway to a less explored location around their town.

Urban Escapes

For those who take a Sunday as a day to unwind. Conducted every 3rd Sunday and led by KTM Dealers, this ride offers the perfect opportunity for those who frequent a quick ride.

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Q&A
WITH
PAN NALIN

The filmmaker, whose recent release Chhello Show *is India's official entry to the 95th Academy Awards, talks about cinema becoming content, the future of movie theatres, and his game plan for the Oscars*

By Ananya Ghosh

How Nalin Kumar Pandya, who grew up in a remote village of Gujarat, became internationally-acclaimed filmmaker Pan Nalin is a story for another day. Or, as the man himself puts it, "that's a long, long story; maybe I will need about a dozen more *Last Film Shows* to tell it."

Today, it is about the present, which seems every bit perfect, and the future. His recent release, *Last Film Show* (*Chhello Show*) is India's contender at the 95th Oscars in the international feature category. But this future is built on his rather intriguing backstory. Although set against the backdrop of movie theatres transitioning from celluloid to digital and the shutting down of thousands of single-screen cinemas across India, *Last Film Show* is, in fact, part autobiographical. "In my heart, I always knew *Last Film Show* is my story," he confirms, as he sits down for an interview, taking some time out amid his whirlwind international screenings schedule.

You have been a regular at various international film festivals and your movies have been picking up awards consistently. But what is your game plan for the Oscars for *The Last Show*?

The nomination from the FFI (Film Federation of India) is just the beginning. The game plan is to try and find as many screenings as we can and show it to the maximum number of Academy members and make it to the shortlist. We are focusing on Los Angeles, London, and Paris. We are confident about what we have made, and we are sure they will like what they would see on screen. We don't need to hype it up.

It is only fair that a film about cinema would pay homage to cinema. But how does it feel to even respond to Cinema Paradiso comparisons? Did you expect this?

In my heart, I always knew *Last Film Show* is my story, and totally different from *Cinema Paradiso* (which I absolutely love). Being the biggest film buff in the universe, how can I hold myself back from paying a tribute to some of the filmmakers who have a deep impact on my life, and my work? So, it's subtle, and integrated into the cinematic treatment of my film. If you're not a cinephile you might not notice anything at all. But that was the idea; I did not want people to easily notice the homages.

You have made this film in Gujarati, which helps in creating a more authentic experience. Do you think language barriers in cinema are slowly dissolving,

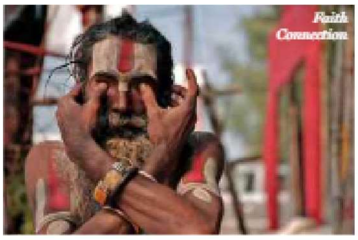
especially with people embracing subtitled films on the OTTs?
Yes, definitely. One of the very few good things that have come out of the pandemic is that audiences across the globe are now open to subtitles in cinema. At Tribeca last year, the festival director told us that it was the first time that the regular American audiences are not complaining about the subtitles (laughs).

It is not that any regional industry suddenly got better during the pandemic. There was always great cinema being made in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala etc., but people were not exposed to it. During the pandemic, with the OTT platforms, people started discovering these movies and industries like never before. I have never believed in tags such as indie cinema, arthouse cinema, world cinema, studio films, festival films, etc. I don't even agree with the idea of categorising myself as an indie filmmaker. In its essence, cinema is a commercial venture, as much as it is an art form. I have always believed that all should reach the audience. I want an *Angry Indian Goddesses* or a *Samsara* or *The Last Film Show* to be released at the same multiplex or platform that is showing *James Bond*, *Star Wars*, and Mission Impossible. People should have the option to choose between a *Samsara* and a Bond movie. This is finally happening, and it is a great time for filmmakers.

What is your take on regional-language cinema and Bollywood merging into Indian cinema in the future?
Since *Samsara* days, I have very humbly rejected these ideas of Bollywood, Hollywood, Tollywood etc. It is cinema and it is Indian cinema, be it in any language. How do you define a film as a Gujarati one? Yes, the language of *The Last Film Show* is Gujarati, but my crew is from all across India — my cinematographers are from Maharashtra, my chief assistant directors are from Himachal, my sound recordist is from Kerala, one of my actresses is from Rajasthan, and so on. And it is not that I picked this team to make it an 'inclusive' crew. I just picked the right talent for my film. How can you then confine it to just being a Gujarati film? This is the real face of Indian cinema. I think it is high time that we call our cinema, Indian Cinema, and nothing else.

As someone who was charmed by watching cinema on the big screen, how does it feel now that cinema is mostly viewed on mobile screens instead of movie theatres? What is the future of cinema?
The way we consume cinema has changed worldwide over the years, especially during the pandemic. Right now, the industry is still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic and trying to find its footing. The discussion about the cinema of the future and the future of cinema is still going on, and the answers are yet to be found. There are also boundaries blurring between cinema and video games and web shows. It is going to be an interesting time, and we have to see how much of 'cinema' will prevail.

Samsara


Faith Connection

Your movie is an ode to celluloid films. And as a filmmaker in love with that format, how does it feel to work with the digital format?

There is always that ache when something new takes over. But then, I have always embraced change. When I wanted to make movies as a student, it was really an expensive affair to shoot a 3-minute film on a 16mm camera. Even if I get the money to shoot it, I couldn't afford to process it. Even if I managed that bit, I wouldn't have had money to put sound to it. Films were hugely expensive. Digital has given the freedom from that. Now, all you need is a mobile phone and a laptop to make a movie. Filmmaking has become much more liberal and democratic. That was unthinkable even 15 years back. But just as when pens and pencils were invented, not everyone who owned one became a writer, similarly, owning a mobile phone that can shoot videos will not make everyone a filmmaker.

In your movie, a large part of the charm of cinema is about the lavishly-mounted larger-than-life cinema. With the OTTs, is cinema also losing its aspirational side?
Streaming platforms (and the pandemic) have forever changed the way we consume stories. With the streaming platforms, cinema has been reduced to 'content', and when something is content, before you realise, it becomes a product of consumption. Each such product needs a great distribution system. From there on, it is all downhill.

Valley of Flowers

Last Film Show

Still from *Angry Indian Goddesses*

> *"But just as when pens and pencils were invented, not everyone who owned one became a writer, similarly, owning a mobile phone that can shoot videos will not make everyone a filmmaker"*

***Samsara* was a 100-crore film in the international market. Yet, it never got a mainstream release in India. Over time, has releasing such films here become easier?**
Samsara was my first feature, that too in Ladakhi-Tibetan dialect, but I was blown away by its global success. By the time its theatrical release crossed the 100-crore box office, the movie was everywhere except India. Some 20 years later, the situation is the same, it is extremely tough to do a theatrical release in India. Also, it is one of the most expensive countries to release a film. The biggest problem in India is distribution and exhibition.

Keeping Up With The Kardashians

A still fom *Jersey Shore*

Finding Comfort **In Cringe**

Can't stop watching reels on Instagram or that one show that everybody else hates? You are not the only one. Most of us secretly have that one show that's our guilty pleasure. But what makes cringe-watching such a phenomenon?

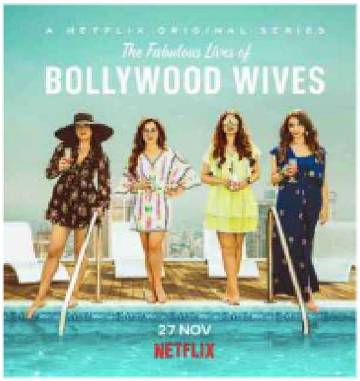
By Ananya Swaroop

"Yet another season?" I screamed as my friend scowled that *Koffee With Karan (KWK)* has gotten renewed for the eighth season. We collectively cringed even at the thought of it. But for me, it was more of peer pressure. In my head, I was jumping with excitement. Yes, *KWK* is a mindless show. But the satisfaction that one gets after knowing that their favourite celebrity's dating life is as trash as theirs, or knowing that these drop-dead-gorgeous humans also struggle with weight issues and diet plans, is unmatchable.

And Johar is aware of what makes his show a talking point season after season. "...I know, just like my movies, as a film-maker, I'm not taken really seriously by the intellectuals, and even people who watch television will find this a guilty pleasure. Everyone will watch it but they will criticise," Johar had said in an interview while talking about his show.

One of the major reasons why people love to watch cringe content is because it's easier to see someone in an embarrassing situation than to be in one. Also, after the initial laughs, one feels a certain empathy towards a person who has landed themselves in such an awkward situation. By watching people at their worst or struggle with worst-case-scenarios on screen, not only does it make the content relatable but also, by realising the cringe quotient of the reactions, somewhere equips one to handle or avoid similar situations/reactions.

> *"I watched, rather binge-watched* Indian Matchmaking *season 2 (2022) because it was trending on the Internet. I wanted to be part of the conversation"—Shivalli Arun*



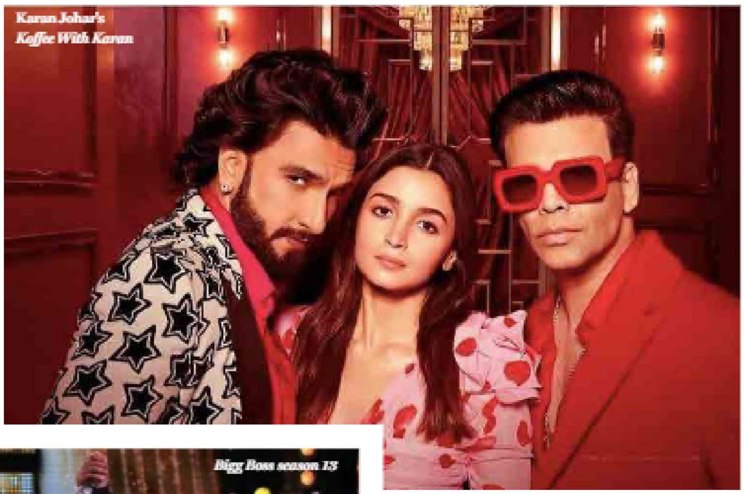
The cast of *Friends*

"A really good way for me to unwind is by binge-watching *Jersey Shore* (2009-2012). The housemates are always doing something stupid, and it's just comforting to know that somewhere, someone is absurd enough to be on this show and is okay with embarrassing oneself by putting themselves in such weird situations," says Apoorv Singh, 28.

For some, the urge to watch cringe content comes from the peer pressure to stay relevant. After all, not being able to contribute to a serious trashing session with friends may be a chance missed. For Shivalli Arun, 25, so is the case. She admits, "I watched, rather binge-watched *Indian Matchmaking* season 2 (2022) because it was trending on the Internet. I wanted to be part of the conversation. And there is nothing more comforting than sitting together with your friends with the sole purpose of trashing a show. You get to be the judge."

And quite often, a show or a film that was considered perfectly fine when it was first released, has now fallen under the category of cringe with advancing times. People have become more aware of what to watch, they have ample choices to pick from, and stories in general have become much more streamlined. Also, with concepts of inclusivity, patriarchy, misogyny, body shaming, etc. becoming part of regular conversations, many old shows are now considered problematic and even cringe worthy especially when viewed through the lens of the new woke generation. So, cringe content can be subjective. While *Friends* might be the it show for a fan, it might be a cringe fest for some.

"I like watching it because it's a change



Karan Johar's
Koffee With Karan

Selling Sunset

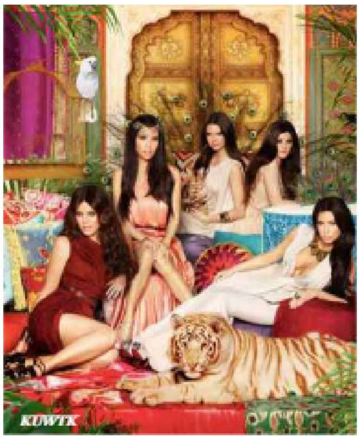
Bigg Boss season 13

Dynasty

of vibe. Why do I consider it to be cringe? Well, most of Monica Geller's jokes are boring. Some of the events in the show are unrealistic and even the reactions that the characters have are overexaggerated. And what's with the people laughing in the background all the time?" says Siddhant Saxena, 27, who finds the '90s sitcom cringe.

But, what makes him go back to the show is its relatability. "I don't mind watching the show only because you can relate to certain adult dilemmas shown in the show, which are quite real when you start living on your own."

This is probably the same reason why *Bigg Boss*, even on its 16th season remains popular. "The show is so relatable. It is a mix of the emotions and phases that one goes through in a day. There is comedy, friendship, love, fights, arguments and whatnot. What makes it more interesting is the fact that they are actually getting paid for this," guffaws Avantika Agarwal, 26, a bonafide fan of the show.



KUWTK

Samaira Khan, 23, also a *Bigg Boss* fan, however, watches the show as it acts as a "good break" from all the serious content she consumes. She says, "I am all for watching serious shows and movies, but it becomes taxing sometimes. I watch *BB* because it is a no-brainer cringe show. You don't need to put in any effort to understand what's happening or follow up. You can pick up from any episode anywhere, and it will still be interesting and funny."

Another show that is a rage on the Internet is *The Fabulous Lives Of Bollywood Wives* (2020/2022), which is in its second season. Sometimes shows like this work because watching a famous person and what happens in their lives appeal to people. That's the very reason behind the humongous popularity of shows like *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* aka *KUWTK* (2007-2021) and *The Kardashians* (2022). Sanskriti Gupta, 24, is one such ardent fan who loves to be updated with the tea. She tells me, "I like *watching The Fabulous Lives Of Bollywood Wives* because it's like *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* of India. It shows what really goes on in the houses of these famous people and although it is very unrelatable, it's fun to see them in such hilarious situations."

Indian Matchmaking

Elizabeth Gillies, Wakeema Hollis, and Sam Adegoke in *Dynasty* (2017)

The drama, the twists and turns and the almost unimaginable storylines keep you hooked to such content — you are eager to know what happens next, and that makes you watch cringe content religiously. "*Dynasty (2017-2022)* is a full-on drama soap opera. It has all the elements that make you binge-watch the series. I love the drama, the relationships, and the crazy dynamics of the rich business family. Some characters are so strong and independent that they have even made a special place in my heart," says Vedant Gupta, 25.

Akansha Kapoor, 29, indulges in cringe shows for a little extra dopamine. "One of the major reasons I watch it is because living in a fast-paced city, the pulse of my daily life is pretty high. Too much is happening all the time. I love watching true-crime dramas but sometimes, it can be just a bit too much for the brain to process after a hectic day at work. It's nice to have something you can watch and not take it seriously. I watch a lot of trash TV across the board but currently, I have been watching reality TV. *Selling Sunset (2019)* is something I am really hooked to, and then there is *The Kardashians*, of course."

Pleasant or not, likeable or not, sensible or not — cringe is comforting and it keeps us in touch with a reality that we spend trying to keep out of sight in real life.

The Accidental Actor: **Tillotama Shome**

This 'crossover actor' has been the toast of the international festival circuit and the poster girl for independent cinema in India, so it's not surprising at all that Tillotama Shome is now raging in the OTT arena too. We catch up with her on all things cinema

By Ananya Ghosh

There are movies you like, movies you marvel at, and then there are those rare few movies that keep haunting you even years later. For me, Anup Singh's film, *Qissa: The Tale of a Lonely Ghost* (2013), falls in the third category.

Although the poignant movie had stupendous performances by the lead cast that included Irrfan Khan, Tillotama Shome, Tisca Chopra, and Rasika Dugal, it was Shome's nuanced and even heart-breaking portrayal of Kanwar Singh — a girl raised as a boy by her father and then married to another woman — that has stayed with me for almost a decade.

"*Qissa* is an incredibly important film in my life. Working with Anup was the acting school I never went to. He has given me tools that I can carry to any film I do. His process is centred in his deep love for human beings," says Shome, who won the best actress award at the Abu Dhabi Film Festival for the same.

But then, Tillotama Shome had established herself as a powerhouse actor from her very first outing as Alice, the demure help of the Vermas in Mira Nair Oscar-nominated 2001 film *Monsoon Wedding*.

Like many in the industry, she became an actor by chance. She was born in Kolkata to Anupam and Baishakhi Shome. Since her dad was with the Indian Air Force, she grew up in different parts of the country. "We were moving from one place to another every few years, forgetting a language, and learning a new one," recalls Shome. "Most of our time went in playing in the park or climbing trees and reading books. Television was limited, and my parents used to take us out for one English film once a month when we moved to Bangalore. That was the extent of our exposure to cinema," she reminisces.

She joined Arvind Gaur's Asmita theatre group while studying English Literature at Lady Shri Ram College for Women, Delhi. The reason was not, however, her love for acting. "No one at home spoke in Hindi, and I knew I had to learn the language," she says. But Asmita helped her in ways she didn't expect. "It was a daily fight with my shortcomings. Observing senior actors like Deepak Dobriyal and Shalini Vats was pure learning. But I was always terrified of my terrible Hindi," she chortles.

More than anything, her stint at Asmita helped her overcome her speech impediment. And it made her curious about the process. "I overcame my stammer through theatre and I wanted to study how it worked. Drama therapy and educational theatre answered that question. Chris Vine was a master in process work and was teaching at NYU. I had to go and learn from him, to understand what happened to me," says the actor who did a master's program in educational theatre from New York University

But, "Cinema was never the next step. Cinema was an act of defiance, to see if I could make the impossible possible," she adds. Before joining NYU, it was while she was doing her Masters in English Literature at DU that she cracked the audition for *Monsoon Wedding*. In fact, she went to NYU armed with a letter of recommendation from Mira Nair.

After graduating from NYU, she took up

a job with Creative Arts Team, and was assigned to work at domestic violence shelters and prisons. Although the experience of working with prison inmates gave her newer perspectives, two-and-a-half years later, she found herself itching to return to India, and act.

Although Shome did quite a few projects, including Indo-European/ Australian collaborations, the film that I next saw her in was Dibakar Banerjee's political thriller, *Shanghai*. She gave a searing performance as Aruna Ahmadi. That year, she was also the sword-wielding Queen in the 2012 psychedelic Bengali fantasy, *Tasher Desh* — an edgy, risqué, and deeply polarising retelling of Rabindranath Tagore's 1933 dance drama by the same name. It not only showcased her versatility, but also reflected her knack for cinema that was not essentially mainstream.

"I don't have an end goal. I am seeking experiences that excite me and I am not enslaved to any goal whatsoever. I decided to come back to acting seven years later because I was exhausted, and wanted the salve of fiction. I have followed my gut even if it were at odds with well-intended secular advice. I am glad that I can say that this is my vocation, and one of the few things in the world that make me very happy," she says.

She has since given some stellar performances in movies like *Shadows of Time*, *Hindi Medium*, *Kadvi Hawa*, *The Bastard Child*, *Angrezi Medium*, and of course, *Qissa: The Tale of a Lonely Ghost*.

She bagged a Best Supporting Actress Filmfare nomination for her turn as Bonnie in Konkona Sensharma's sparkling directorial debut, *Death in the Gunj*. But it is with her turn as Ratna in Rohena Gera's debut feature, *Sir* (released in India in 2020) that Shome landed the Best Actress (Critics) at *Filmfare*. The movie also introduced Shome to a much wider audience base back home thanks to its OTT release.

A Death in the Gunj

Delhi Crime

Chintu Ka Birthday

Sir

"Rohena made the film with great passion and independence. Her fight to make this film, in her terms, was nothing short of a miracle. To get it to premiere at Cannes and win there was magic. *Sir* on Netflix made our work accessible to numbers hitherto unimaginable for us. It changed the scale of the audience. It was my first exposure to the explosive numbers of OTT. The nice thing about being a late bloomer is you are excited about things that others are already used to," she says.

Her subtle yet strong portrayal of Ratna is a masterclass in nuanced acting. Once again, it is in the quieter moments that the actor shines the most. "Of the lot that is offered to me, I do that which excites me. Personally, it would be more difficult playing someone who is very verbose. But if the world of the project grabs my attention, I will swallow my fears. Dialogues are just one of many such fears," she reveals. Maybe her having a speech impediment and being monosyllabic in the earlier part of her life has made her express and emote this well even when the dialogues are sparse.

Her latest outing sees her play an antagonist in *Delhi Crime* season 2. As the unhinged but scheming Karishma, she is 50 shades of grey and some more. Her performance reminded some of Batman's Joker. We ask her if this was intentional. "Neither did I think [of the character] nor was I given the Joker as a reference. But a few people did talk about that vibe once the series was out. I want to be cool and say yes, but that would be a lie," she clarifies.

> "Sir *was my first exposure to the explosive numbers of OTT. The nice thing about being a late bloomer is you are excited about things that others are already used to*"

Apart from getting rave reviews, *Delhi Crime* is also special as it sees her collaborate with her *Monsoon Wedding* co-star Shefali Shah. "To have started my journey with Shefali and sharing space with her once again 20 years later was life-affirming. We are still doing what we love. We are still here. We are not bitter. We are both in our 40s, and the busiest we have ever been. Clearly, the memo about our 'shelf life' got lost in transition," she quips.

20 years into the business and art of cinema, it is *Delhi Crime* might have made her a household name, but her international acclaim has grown over the years. Shome recently won the best actor award at UK Asian Film Festival for Goutam Ghose's 2019 film *The Wayfarers* (*Raahgir*). Ask her if such films have a better prospect now to reach the audience beyond the festival circuit, especially with the OTTs coming in, and she says, "This has been the story of independent cinema and I have been answering this question for the last 20 years. And yet the films get made. It is a battle and it takes a robust heart to embark on the journey of making an independent film," she concludes. ⊖

Climbers walking along knife-edge ridges of death zone in Everest

Documenting The **Sherpa Mountaineers, Finally**

They are collectively the world's greatest climbing community but have largely been ignored till recently. A book now details their greatest achievement and the indispensability of summiting the world's tallest mountains

By Murali Menon

Most of us have this idealised view of Sherpas as tough, committed, welcoming mountain guides who've helped mountaineers conquer numerous towering mountains in the Himalayas, especially Everest. Their real story though has several other dimensions, say Kathmandu-based journalist Pradeep Bashyal and social science researcher Ankit Babu Adhikari, whose recently-released book, *Sherpa: Stories of Life and Death from the Forgotten Guardians of Everest*, is an intimate account of the Nepalese ethnic group who are crucial to mountaineering in the Himalayas.

Every climbing season, for example, a team of icefall doctors, which consists of highly skilled Sherpas, create and maintain a route across the treacherous Khumbu Icefall on Everest. They do that across dozens of mountains that are popular with mountaineers across Nepal. Take Sherpas out of the equation and there would be no guided mountaineering expeditions — at least from the Nepal side.

Bashyal and Adhikari's deeply researched book tells the story of the first-generation climbing Sherpas from the 1930s and 1940s, whose history spans key geographies, including Khumbu, Rowaling, and Darjeeling, and brings into focus the modern generation descendants who are no longer content with being invisible men on Everest. Here's what we learned from the book and from a chat with its authors.

Before the 1950s, Adhikari says, the Sherpas' only source of livelihood was trading with Tibet, which ended with China's annexation of the country. Life also did not change overnight for Sherpas after Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay's first ascent of Everest in 1953, say the authors. Nepal, which was long governed by hereditary rulers and had a turbulent transition to a multiparty parliamentary system, only allowed one expedition per season per route on Everest until the late 1980s. "However, democracy was established in 1990 and the king's direct rule ended. Nepal then opened to foreign tourists and adopted a liberal economic policy, under which the mountaineering industry got to explore its real potential," write Bashyal and Adhikari.

Tenzing Norgay might remain the most famous Sherpa until climate change kills us all, but there were several other first-generation Sherpa heroes, say the authors. "Several other Sherpas struggled with Norgay through the 1940s. These included Ang Tharkay Sherpa who was both a mentor and friend of Norgay. Then there were supporting Sherpas and porters such as Kanchha Sherpa, without whom the first successful summit of Everest wouldn't have been possible," says Adhikari. Kanchha is the last living member of the team that accomplished the first ascent.

Three brothers in Antarctica

Over 4,000 people have climbed Everest since 1953, but less than 200 have done it without oxygen. The late Ang Rita Sherpa was the first to summit Everest 10 times without oxygen

The late Pasang Lhamu Sherpa, the first Nepali woman to climb Everest, is a national hero. Pasang Lhamu summited Everest in

TENDI SHERPA; PRADEEP BASHYAL; LHAKPA SHERPA; KANCHHA SHERPA FOUNDATION

Statue of Tenzing Norgay Sherpa in front of a museum in Namche Bazar

DO NOT CLIMB

Panuru Sherpa and his son Lhakpa

1993 but died on her way down. In 2019, Furdiki Sherpa and Nima Doma Sherpa summited the mountain in honour of their climber husbands. In 2021, Dawa Yangzum Sherpa, 32 and an Everest summiteer became Nepal's first internationally recognised female mountain guide.

Over 4,000 people have climbed Everest since 1953, but less than 200 have done it without oxygen. The late Ang Rita Sherpa was the first to summit Everest 10 times without oxygen. In 1987, he became the first man to conquer Everest without oxygen in winter. Ang Rita is not the only Sherpa to feature in the record books. Every climbing season, Sherpas set new records —often by breaking their respective previous records. In May, Kami Rita Sherpa scaled Everest for the 26th time, breaking his own record set last May. In August, his compatriot Sanu Sherpa achieved the 'unbeatable' by becoming the only person in the world to climb the 14 highest peaks twice. "The list is long. Babu Chhiri Sherpa spent 21 hours at the summit of Everest without supplemental oxygen in May 1999. That record is still unbroken. Mingma David Sherpa remains the youngest mountaineer to have climbed all eight-thousanders (in 2019); he was 30 then. Over the years, Sherpas have set speed records, rescue records," says Adhikari.

In January, Mingma Sherpa and Chhang Dawa Sherpa, two out of three Sherpa brothers, became the first Nepalis to reach the South Pole, as part of their mission to achieve the 'Explorer's Grand Slam'. The Explorers Grand Slam or Adventurers Grand Slam is an adventurers' challenge to reach the North Pole, the South Pole, and all the Seven Summits. Mingma is the first South Asian to summit the world's 14 highest peaks. The brothers are also the first siblings to climb the 14 highest mountains. Tashi Lakpa, the youngest of the trio, is the youngest person to climb Everest without supplementary oxygen. He set the record when he was 19. The brothers operate the Seven Summit Treks, Nepal's largest expedition company.

Tenzing Norgay's statue in Darjeeling

Kanchha Sherpa holding a picture from 1953 expedition

Most sherpas, who begin their career as porters before becoming guides on Everest, earn anywhere between Nepali Rupee 4 to 5 lakh every climbing season. But men such as Tendi Sherpa and Mingma David Sherpa are celebrated guides and mountaineers who are paid top dollar for their services and are mountaineering celebrities in their own right. These men, along with the likes of Tashi Lakpa, serve as role models for the younger generation of sherpas looking to make their mark and emerge out of the shadow of foreign climbers.

According to Adhikari and Bashyal, the Sherpas are heavily impacted by climate change. Grazing pastures for their yaks are disappearing and unpredictable weather has impacted farming. Climbing has also become more dangerous, say the authors. The Khumbu Icefall has become more volatile, and many Sherpas consider the 2014 avalanche, which killed 16 of their compatriots, as a warning sign. Here's how Kami Rita Sherpa sees it in the book: "You can feel the changes in Everest in your every step up. It's getting easier in some places and elsewhere it has become harder to climb. It's not about how easy or difficult it's getting. Something's off! And I know it's not going right."

ON THE ROCKS

We bring you a guide to indoor bouldering, a physical and mental workout far more engaging than the gym

By Radhika Agrawal

We don't work out just to look good. Fitness means different things to different people, be it staying in top shape, blowing off steam after a rough day, taking care of one's health, or even making new friends. While the gym has been the most common and accessible platform for achieving these goals, it often falls short when we look at fitness from a more holistic lens.

Doing versions of the same exercise over and over on leg, chest, and back can lead to a dwindling drive in many people. Perhaps that's why so many gym memberships are abandoned midway. If you're someone who seeks a more present and participative workout — one that challenges both your body and your mind — indoor bouldering might be just the thing for you.

Bouldering is a type of free climbing performed on boulders or small rocks. When we say 'free', we mean it is practiced without the use of safety harnesses or ropes, though crash pads offer some security. "Indoor bouldering allows you to simulate the movement of climbing on real rocks in a safe and controlled environment," says Vrinda Bhageria, co-founder of BoulderBox, a bouldering gym in Delhi. She explains that the most obvious difference between outdoor and indoor bouldering is that everything is largely pre-determined in the latter. "The climbing routes are defined by using the same colour holds, the grade level of difficulty is mentioned, and the route setter has a certain path in mind when designing the movement," she says. And, of course, the climbing gym comes equipped with safety mats all over the floor, unlike the outdoors.

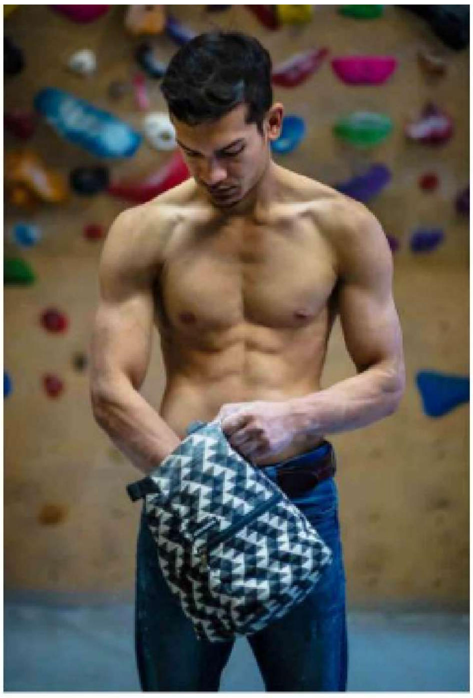
So, where do you begin? For someone like me, who can barely tie her shoelaces, understanding rope work and learning how to maneuver advanced climbing gear can be intimidating. Indoor bouldering, however, is probably one of the least equipment-intensive forms of rock climbing. All you need is a pair of climbing shoes and some powder or liquid chalk, both of which climbing gyms rent out readily. And if you're worried about not having the upper body strength to try out something like this, consider that climbing comes very naturally to humans. In fact, many evolutionary biologists suggest that it can be found in our very DNA.

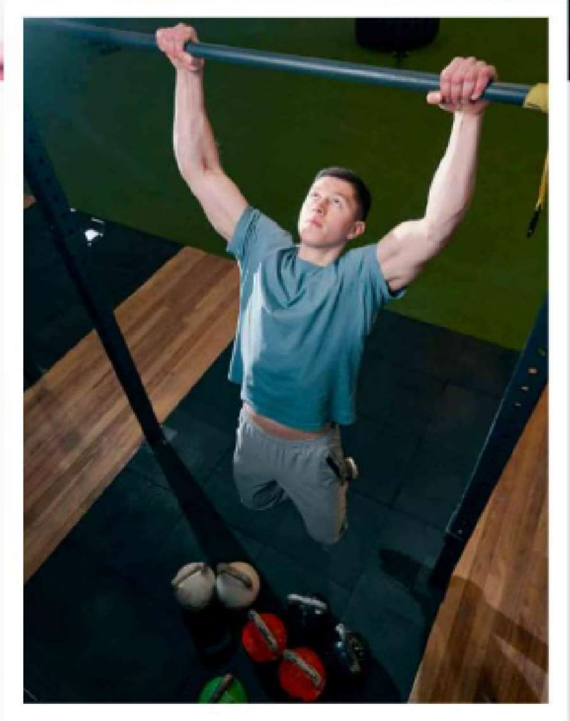
"Bouldering is all about exploring the potential of the human body. Not just its power or strength, but also its rhythm and flow," says Adarsh Singh, professional sport climber and Head Route Setter and Coach at Climb City.

The best thing about bouldering is that it's for everyone. Whether you're a beginner who has never done a pull up in their life or an all-out fitness freak, you will find a difficulty level that works for you. A climbing gym's environment is infectious, filled with energy, motivation, and support that'll make you want to keep coming back for more.

"A sense of community is another deep-rooted part of the sport, where you find people who keep pushing you and encouraging you in your climbing journey, sparking important conversations around good practice, safety, outdoor ethics, training, and banter," says Delhi-based climber, Keith Peter. Most bouldering gyms even allow kids over the age of five to climb under supervision, which enables you to

ABHIJEET SINGH; SHUTTERSTOCK





share the experience with your loved ones in a way that the gym or other sports often can't. "It is a social sport, so the experience is enhanced when you're surrounded by like-minded people. When I started, I got a lot of help from many experienced climbers regarding technique, mindset, and training," says Nipun Malik, who came across the sport in 2020.

In any sport or workout activity, progress is often measured via physical results in the body. However, the means of measurement may vary. Away from the world of calorie-counting and bicep-sizing found at the gym, bouldering offers a more comprehensive outlook. "The movements in most gym settings are very uniform and so individuals get good at them through the principle of specificity. Bouldering, on the other hand, is a lot more versatile because the movements are unique and multidirectional," says physical therapist Minash Gabriel, founder of Myo Movement. As a full body workout, it works on your shoulders, forearms, core, legs, and more. If you find yourself icing your fingers after a session, don't be alarmed. Bouldering allows you to build both large and small muscles, and is particularly great for improving grip strength.

> *"Bouldering is all about exploring the potential of the human body. Not just its power or strength, but also its rhythm and flow" — Adarsh Singh, professional sport climber*

Aside from being a demanding physical workout, indoor bouldering also exercises the brain. "Many boulder problems are complex, and they require thought, coordination, and action, which engages your mind deeply," explains Malik. The frustrations and disappointment of being stuck and the 'aha' moment when you finally crack it make solving a 'problem' or a route a tremendously rewarding endeavour.

Many enthusiasts also swear by the mental health benefits of the activity. In fact, a 2017 study found that bouldering could be used as psychotherapy for treating depression in adults. "Bouldering helps me fight anxiety, increases my attention span, allows me to be calm in stressful situations on and off the wall, instills self-belief, and makes me happy," summarises Peter.

Now, let's get real. Though indoor bouldering minimises the risk associated with the sport, it is impossible to eliminate the possibility of an injury. You can't climb without falling — but falling safely is key. "For absolute beginners, we recommend taking it slow and understanding how to land safely by falling from shorter heights. Once they are comfortable, they can then begin to push their limits," says Bhageria.

Though it's now an Olympic event, indoor bouldering is still fairly new in India. But with more bouldering and climbing gyms opening up in different parts of the country, people are becoming more aware of the sport and the merits it carries. As someone who has represented the country in several world cups over the last 12 years, Singh has seen the sport grow up with him. "We need the support of the government and people of India to shape a bright future for bouldering. We need to work on building awareness not only around climbing as a sport, but also as a lifestyle," he says.

5 exercises to become a stronger climber

With inputs from Minash Gabriel

1. Farmer's carries: Also known as farmer's walk, all you need to do to perform this exercise is walk holding a weight in each hand. You can use a variety of equipment like kettlebells, plates, dumbbells, etc

2. Dead hangs: Great for improving forearm and grip strength, dead hangs are performed by simply hanging off a pull-up bar. You can also try a single-handed dead hang to increase the difficulty level

3. Forearm exercises: Strong forearms make a strong climber. Work on your forearm strength with flexion, extension, ulnar, and radial deviation with resistance bands

4. Bicep exercises: Build your bicep strength by incorporating isometric exercises such as bicep planks and static bicep curls in your workout routine

5. Scapular push-ups: The scapula is the anchor of the arm. Scapular push-ups are performed while standing, with the help of a wall

Ankur Bhatia

Best known for his role as Sangram Singh Rathore in Ram Madhvani's web series Aarya, *Ankur Bhatia has been grabbing eyeballs for not just his acting chops but also his fab physique. The actor spills the beans on his fitness routine*

By Ananya Swaroop

A WEEK IN FITNESS

It keeps on changing. If I am shooting, then I try to at least hit the gym thrice a week. Otherwise, I try and keep it to five to six days. I like to work on two body parts a day if I am working out for more than three days a week. If not, then I focus on the upper body or lower body. I do not repeat the same kind of routine. It depends on my mood.

THE MUST-HAVE GYM EQUIPMENT FOR A HOME GYM

First of all, a yoga mat is a must. A pull-up bar is also necessary. An ab roller that I use to make my core strong and work on my abs. These three are pretty much what I need to hit every body part.

TO GAIN MUSCLES, HE...

When I am trying to bulk up and if I have to do it really quickly, I stick to heavy and compound exercises. I make sure I don't overdo it. I try to be in the gym for 30-40 minutes and do four to five exercises including chest press, bench press and barbell press, etc.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN WORKING OUT

The most important thing to keep in mind is to have a good form. It is very easy to injure yourself in the gym without even realising. Take precautions and always be careful with your form.

> *"The most important thing to keep in mind is to have a good form. It is very easy to injure yourself in the gym without even realising. Take precautions and always be careful with your form"*

A MUSCLE GROUP HE LOVES & HATES TO WORK ON

I love working out on my chest, biceps, and even triceps. I hate working out on my lower body, it is too painful.

DIET FOOD THAT TASTES EQUALLY GOOD

For me, it is chia seeds, grains, and avocados.

HIS FITNESS INSPIRATION

My fitness inspiration is this channel on YouTube called *Makaveli'Motivation*. It has a compilation of various workout videos with several athletes and bodybuilders featured in it. It also has some great music and motivational quotes.

TOP THREE GYM TRACKS

Remember The Name by Fort Minor, *Till I Collapse* by Eminem, and *Turn Down For What* by DJ Snake and Lil Jon.

A FICTIONAL CHARACTER HE'D LIKE TO WORK OUT WITH

I'll choose Hulk to be my fitness partner.

TOP THREE CHEAT MEAL PREFERENCES

It will be cheese pizzas, burgers, and pancakes.

Eco-friendly mandap for a To The Aisle client

Groom's *baaraat* on bicycle

Make Way For The Great Indian **Green Wedding**

Sustainable weddings are becoming a popular choice among young couples. But is this just another fad or would it change the future?

By Ananya Swaroop

Ali Fazal and Richa Chadha got married this October. More than the glamorous pictures, the gorgeous bride and groom, and the picturesque location, what made the wedding special was that it was an eco-friendly affair. Apart from using natural elements like flowers, jute, and recycled or repurposed wood, the couple also focused on managing the waste mindfully. To reduce the food waste, the duo hired experts to curate food experiences that are more sustainable.

Given the growing climate concerns, sustainable weddings are the need of the hour. "Indian weddings see a lot of wastage — from papers and plastics to flowers and excess food — and it is a serious environmental concern. Better planning can help make weddings more eco-friendly. Sustainably means that you use what you have and don't create more. Not just weddings, Sustainability is required everywhere — be it in some social event or regular day-to-day life," says Zashank Bhatia, director at Tailormade Experiences. His team, partnered with Purple Tree Events, Devika Narain and Company, Paul Francis, and Miray Events to ensure an eco-friendly wedding for Fazal and Chadha.

Pledging To Be A
CARBON NEUTRAL WEDDING
#sidika
#letlovegrow

Diksha Haria's sustainable wedding

More and more couples are taking environmental issues seriously and looking at sustainable weddings. Prerika Puri, founder, To The Aisle, says: "As the younger generation is taking charge of their wedding, they are bringing in a conscious change. They want things a certain way but not at the cost of the environment. So, eco-friendly weddings are more in demand than ever."

Rishab Bhansali and Lipika Dugar got married in 2021 and the couple opted for a green wedding. "It involved a lot of brainstorming. Finding alternatives to plastic, sourcing them, and making sure that the tweaks seamlessly blend and the guests have the same comfort as any other normal wedding. Planning an eco-friendly wedding comes with its own set of challenges," says Bhansali.

Diksha Haria, the founder of Social Shehnai, who had also opted for an eco-friendly wedding admits that it is not easy to plan one. Haria says, "We had to convince our parents to opt for a non-traditional approach. We had to also convince a lot of the vendors to think of unique solutions. We worked with the caterers to ban plastic bottles completely. But in the end, everyone understands the bigger picture."

Ali Fazal and Richa Chadha

But one of the most crucial parts of planning an eco-friendly wedding is reducing and managing waste. Parthip Thyagarajan, co-founder and CEO, WeddingSutra, gives us an insight into the kind of waste that is produced at a wedding and how it can be managed. He says, "A fully-sustainable Indian wedding may not always be practical, given the fact that there are flowers and silks, which are quite integral to our culture, but waste management is a very important element. In Bangalore, for example, there are a couple of waste management companies like Hasiru Dala and Saahas that specialise in waste management for weddings."

According to him, now the families are also opening up to the idea of hiring such specialised companies. "These companies work efficiently in two areas. First is segregating the waste and second is looking at how the waste can be recycled. Flower waste is being used to make *agarbattis*. Waste products with fabrics or other décor materials are used for making home accessory products. There are recycled products that can be used as gifts as well."

This is not something every company does, but the change is happening. "We hope more and more wedding planners will start hiring waste management companies going forward," he signs off. ⊖

Easy Tweaks For An Eco-Friendly Wedding:

1 Buffets encourage waste. You can avoid a lot of food waste with a seated dinner

2 Use glass instead of plastic props

3 Have a system in place to quickly distribute excess food among the less fortunate. Coordinating with an NGO might help in this

4 Use local and in-season flowers instead of getting hundreds of kilos of a certain flower flown down from another city

5 Use jute fabric instead of plastic covers on the food counters and bar tables

Ranveer Brar uses mouth-watering dishes with premium Victorinox cutlery

Victorinox Is Diving Into Indian Cuisine With

Chef Ranveer Brar

Traditional Swiss company Victorinox has joined hands with Chef Ranveer Brar to bring an exciting new series exploring Indian dishes that are a cult favourite

Ever wondered what would it be like to explore Indian cuisine from a gastronomical point of view? Well, now is the time. Swiss watch company Victorinox joined hands with chef Ranveer Brar to bring an exciting video series titled *India in 21 Recipes*.

That's right. Some of the most timeless Indian dishes from all over the country will be curated by chef Brar in an unforgettable manner that leaves you drooling. The culinary narrative discovers delicious and diverse Indian cuisine, where he is seen creating 21 dishes from different states, from scratch. And the best part? These mouth-watering dishes are made using premium Victorinox cutlery. Apart from curating sumptuous food, chef Brar focuses on educating the viewer on tips, tricks, and valuable information about these Swiss knives, their anatomy, and the correct way of using, sharpening, and maintaining them.

Some of the most timeless Indian dishes from all over the country will be curated by chef Brar in an unforgettable manner that leaves you drooling

From Amritsari Chhole, Fish Paturi, Murgh Awadhi Korma, Chicken Kabab, Hyderabadi Biryani, and Prawn Balchao to Jaipur Gatta Curry and others, the series showcases the invention of these opulent and extravagant dishes. The show is available to watch on YouTube on Victorinox India's channel.

Commenting on the collaboration, Brar explains how Victorinox's range of professional and kitchen knives is a perfect addition to your food space. "I am extremely excited about this collaboration with Victorinox. Their kitchen knives have outstanding quality and I simply love preparing my dishes with them," he adds.

Speaking of the famed knives, the Swiss company has launched a limited-edition knife: The Carving Knife Damast Limited Edition 2022, which is made of the famous Damasteel. Part of the Victorinox household knives ranges, this high-quality chef's tool follows on from the success of the two Damast Limited Editions in 2020 and 2021. A highly functional eye-catcher, this new tool represents ancient craftsmanship, where the knife's precision edges enable effortless slicing and clean cuts with the finest cutting surfaces. A truly ultimate kitchen tool for easy slicing and dicing of meats, fish, herbs, vegetables, or fruits, and an ideal instrument for amateur and professional chefs.

The Pleasure Of **Surf Fishing**

Recreational fishing on surf beaches is a popular sport in many parts of the world. Indian angling fans gather on a remote Maharashtra beach to take part in the only surf fishing competition in the country

By Murali Menon

How do you read the surf? Why is catching — and releasing — a jewfish considered more of an accomplishment than snagging a stingray? Exactly how long does it take to catch a fish? Even if you are not remotely interested in angling, the Ali Hussaini World Surf Angling Championship 2022 appears to be a salubrious way to spend time in the last week of November.

The three-day event, organised by the Mumbai-based All India Game Fishing Association (AIGFA), will be held at the little-known, infrequently visited Tondavali Beach, near Malvan, in Maharashtra. (The state government describes the stretch of sand as "generally deserted, but the soft sea breeze blows continuously, giving it a refreshing touch.") About 150 anglers from across India are expected to congregate on the beach between November 24 and 27 to vie for the title of India's surf fishing champion.

Surf fishing is particularly popular in America, where it was born in the early decades of the 20th century and flourished after WW II. The nine-week-long Long Beach Island Surf Fishing Classic, which is in its 68th year and held between October and December every year, is among the oldest competitions in the United States.

This month's Tondavali event is the fifth angling competition conducted by the AIGFA, which claims to be the largest angling body in India, with over 22,000 members. The AIGFA, a not-for-profit charitable organisation, was started in 2006 by the late Ali Husaini, a passionate angler and environmentalist, and aims to not just promote sport fishing, but also protect the fast-depleting stock of sport fish by getting the angler community involved in the protection of water bodies in which the fish reside. "We see ourselves as a 'league of gentlemen anglers', and promote ethical sport fishing," says Santosh Kolwankar, president of the AIGFA.

Surf fishing is particularly popular in America, where it was born in the early decades of the 20th century and flourished after WW II

Over the last decade, the AIGFA has organised several competitive events, including in Ganapatipule, in Maharashtra, Chennai, and a freshwater competition in Andhra Pradesh. The upcoming competition in Tondavali is the AIGFA's biggest event till date. Here, Kolwankar breaks down the intricacies of surf fishing for newbies such as you or us.

What, exactly, is surf fishing?

In surf fishing, you are usually standing on the shoreline or advancing slightly into the surf. You can choose to place your fishing rods in the sand and wait for the fish to pull on your line, or you could wade a bit into the water and hold your line. Distance and accuracy are important to land your bait in the surf. What you're looking to catch is inshore fish.

And what kind of fish are we talking about?

The usual fish that are found inshore are stingrays, fish from the snapper family, including the blubberlip snapper, sand shark, and trevally. And, at times, jewfish.

What are the criteria for judging the competition?

The participants will be divided into groups, which will fish from various parts of the beach. This is, of course, a strictly catch-and-release competition, and every catch will be recorded by marshalls. The catch will be judged according to the length of the fish, but other factors also come into play. Stingrays, which are pretty big, will get you fewer points than, say, a jewfish, which is relatively rare.

How does one read the surf or the beach?

A typical flat beach, preferred by tourists, is not an ideal location for surf fishing. Anglers consider the structure of a beach closely. By structure, we mean sandbars; fish use the troughs between the sandbars to travel — think of them as underwater highways. Then you have rips, which are fast-flowing currents that are created by the funnelling effect between shoals. Or, there are points, which are a part of the beach that juts out, and holes that are deeper sections of water located next to a point. Holes are where smaller fish come to feed on crustaceans and they are followed by larger fish. Plus, one looks for stretches of coastline where there is a lot of life, and by that, we mean small birds looking for prey, and crabs running around. These are all pretty much good places to cast a line.

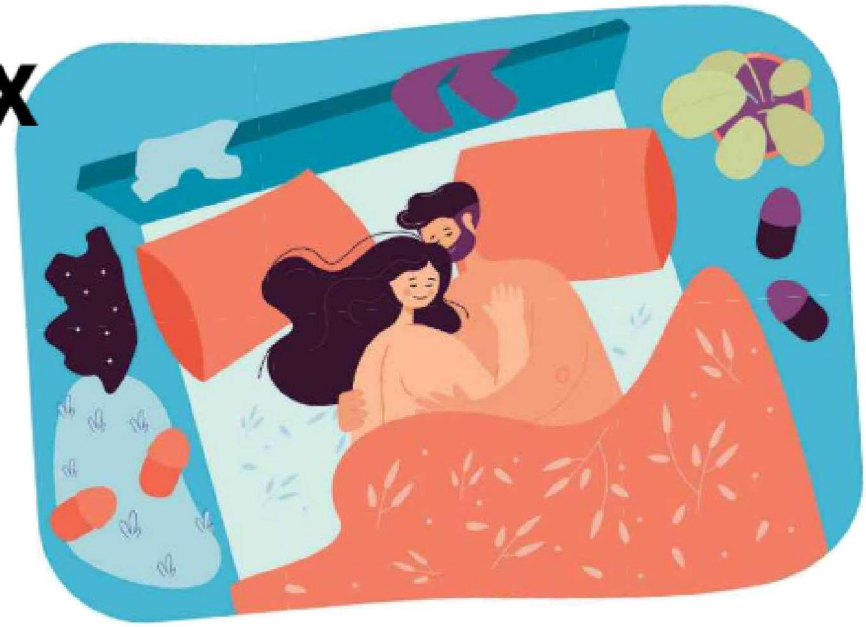
What kind of equipment do you need for surf fishing?

You start with surf fishing rods, ideally about 10-feet long. The ideal length for Indian waters is 12 feet. Surf fishing reels should have long spools or a bait runner/bait-feeder mechanism. A lot of people use the Shimano Baitrunner D or the Okuma Coronado. Then you have fishing lines, weights, hooks, bait, and lures, and surf fishing rigs. Indian anglers prefer the fish-finder rig.

How long usually does it take to land a catch?

That's a tough one, but that's what sport fishing is all about. Sometimes, it can happen as quickly as five minutes, and at others, you have to wait for hours. But you are at the beach, it's all mostly quiet, there is a gentle breeze, so no one really complains.

The Climax Beyond Orgasms



Is an orgasm still the ultimate indicator of a 'good session'? What happens when you put focus off an emotional release instead? Karezza allows one to explore the idea of sexual pleasure beyond the realms of tradition

By Ananya Swaroop & Sanika Achrekar

We are living in a world where a right swipe on a dating app might lead to a great night of sex. But is there a 'hook-up fatigue' looming? More and more young adults are looking beyond just physical intimacy, and it might not be a great time ahead for the 'orgasm collectors'. Yes, orgasms have traditionally been the high point or the crown jewel when it comes to having sex. But with stress and anxiety levels skyrocketing, just physical pleasure might not be enough for a vast majority of the population. Young adults are now increasingly craving an emotional connection. And this is where Karezza comes in.

"A guy I was simply hooking up with was really into the emotional release of it. At first, I thought maybe it's not doing it for him, but when we had full-blown sex twice that night and he didn't ejaculate, we decided to talk about it, and he explained that for him, sex is rarely about orgasming, and more about how connected he feels with his partner. Yes, even when it's just a hook up. I didn't know then that there's a term for it," Neha (name changed), 30, tells us.

'Connection sex' aka Karezza is a word coined from the Italian word 'carezza,' meaning 'caress', by OB/GYN Alice Bunker Stockham for the title of her 1903 book *Karezza: The Ethics of Marriage*. "The goal of this sexual technique, unlike most kinds of sexual intercourse, is not orgasm, but reaching a relaxed state of union with your sexual partner," explains *Healthline*.

> *"The point of Karezza is caressing; where you can orgasm, you do not have to delay it. All you need is to enjoy the touch. Just like meditation" — Tanya Narendra aka Dr Cuterus*

Karezza has its predecessor in 'coitus reservatus' and tantric sex, although here, the mental aspects are more in focus."Karezza is a type of sex practice that gives more importance to the process than the outcome. Through this practice, people can remove the pressure to orgasm from the equation, and be in the here and now through a focus on touch, enjoying sensation, affection and prioritising care during sex and deepening one's physical, emotional, and sexual connection," says Apurupa Vatsalya, a sex educator.

According to Maanvi of Vitamin Stree, a content platform that intends to change the narrative around taboo topics in India, more and more young people are now looking for sex that is both pleasurable and meaningful.

Does sex education play a role in exploring Karezza? Karishma Swarup aka talkyounevergot, a sex educator, explains, "I am not sure if it has any direct role, but definitely, with more discussion about sex and intimacy, people are looking at sex in many different ways."

To this, Vatsalya adds, "Mental health-affirmative sex education promotes slow and intentional engagement to help people address their anxieties around sexual performance."

However, the method does not suggest that you do not orgasm at all. Tanaya Narendra aka Dr Cuterus says, "The very foundation of Karezza is vulnerability. It is about being a little more attentive and passionate to your partner. Additionally, in this kind of setting, many do get confused between semen retention instead of not orgasming at all. That is not the point. The point of Karezza is caressing; where you can orgasm, you do not have to delay it. All you need is to enjoy the touch. Just like meditation."

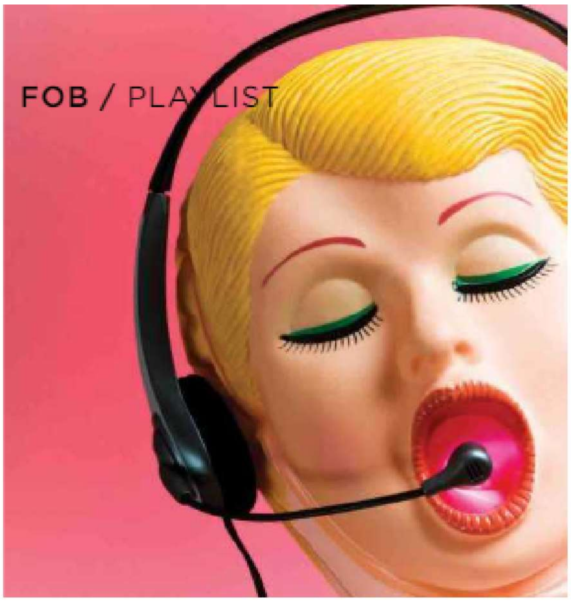
She suggests that having a conversation with your partner pre and post karezza is important. "I think these conversations are important as you can then establish with your partner that you want to have meaningful sex and that it is not just orgasm driven. Such conversations can also be beneficial to people with medical conditions like vaginismus, where there is a lot of anxiety around the penetration." She adds that this technique can also be useful for "people with disabilities, where it is medically not possible for them to form an erection or to be penetrated."

It's all about the connection, after all.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF A KAREZZA SESSION?

- Have a conversation about it before and after
- Keep distractions such as your phones away
- Keep your conversations simple, so as to not make it an anxious experience
- Increase eye contact through engaging in face-to-face positions
- Laugh and smile with each other. Keep it slow and intentional

SHUTTERSTOCK



Move To **The Groove**

Moment of truth: Never underestimate the power of a good sex playlist. A good sensual song can act as a potent aphrodisiac. We ask people for songs recommendations that get them in the mood to make love to help you create your own playlist

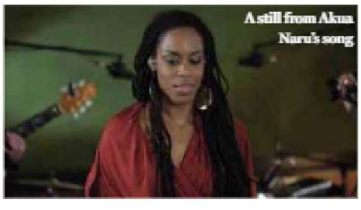
By Ananya Swaroop

Who says *Koffee with Karan* isn't educational? On the first episode of Season 7, Ranveer Singh talked about his 'multiple' sex playlists that help him spice things up between the sheets. While Alia Bhatt, his couch companion, said she didn't have one, we dug in and discovered that there are legit studies that suggest music can help rev up your sex life.

Leeza Mangaldas, 32, a sex-positive content creator, says, "Music has the wonderful potential to ignite or expand a mood. Music can be evocative and a playlist can certainly help create the atmosphere. This holds for both solo and partnered sexual experiences."

Secret

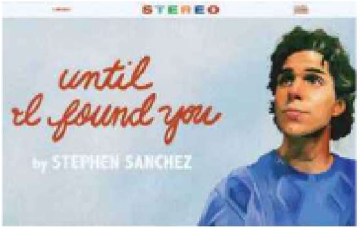
MAROON5
SONGS ABOUT JANE



A still from Akua Naru's song

GETTY IMAGES

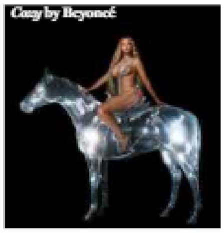
FKA Twig's *Papi Pacify*



The song that works for Leeza? She reveals that her favourite song is *Cozy* from Beyoncé's new album *Renaissance*. "I'm generally a fan of upbeat music that celebrates femininity; it makes me feel sexy," she reveals. But music is subjective. While for some a fun, upbeat song would work well, others might prefer a slow, mellow number to get into the mood.

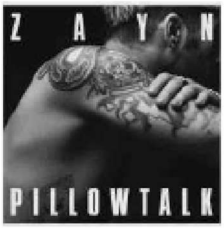
For instance, Sharan Sanil, 27, prefers a calm song like *Poetry: How Does It Feel Now?* by Akua Naru. "I'm a big fan of jazz and spoken word, and this song combines both in a really great, sensual way." Fatema Sidhpurwala, 27, belongs to the mellow group too. For her, CKay's *Love Nwantiti* is the 'it' song because "it's mostly music and the focus is not on lyrics."

For 25-year-old, Ishaan Roy, his hype song is *I Don't Wanna Live Forever* by Zayn and Taylor Swift. "The vibe and the lyrics work wonders for me. Of course, the most important part is the person you are with." Vidushi Yadav, 29, is also a fan of slow songs. "What's better than *Apocalypse* by Cigarettes After Sex. The slow music, great lyrics, and a little bit of pop."



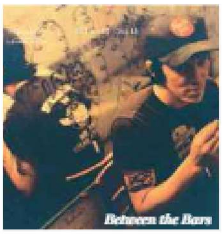
Cozy by Beyoncé

I DON'T WANNA LIVE FOREVER
FIFTY SHADES DARKER
ZAYN | TAYLOR SWIFT



Siddhant Saxena, 25, loves loud songs, and artistes like The Weeknd work magic when getting intimate with a partner. One of his favourites is *Die For You*. "I listened to this song as a virgin back then, and it really gave me some high expectations."

Rushabh Druv, 28, also feels that a good selection of songs can become a crucial backdrop when it comes to making love. He has a number of tracks that get him going. "I do have four to five songs that are ah-worthy, but my favourite is *Pillowtalk*. Right from the sultry vocals, to the rhythm, and the whole vibe, it's literally Zayn Malik who helps me get the best sex experience in bed."



Between the Bars

The same is the case with independent musician, Skand Chaturvedi. To him, music is as important as foreplay. "From the obvious like Cigarettes After Sex and Prateek Kuhad songs to Bollywood classics like *Yaaram* from *Ek Thi Daayan* to playing my own songs, it's a mix. It's okay to run out of positions, but not songs," he quips.

Maroon 5 and Elliot Smith do the magic for some. Soumya Bansal, 30, thinks Maroon 5's *Secret* is her go-to song. Why does it work for her? The groovy beat puts her in the right mood. *Between The Bars* by Elliot Smith does the job for Aditi Swaroop, 29. According to her, the slow song creates the right vibe and soothes her mind.

But sometimes, feeling sexy is all that we need to enjoy sex, which works well for Aparna Ghosh, 41. The songs of FKA Twigs are her jam as they are seductive, surreal, and dramatic. "Twig's *Papi Pacify* is deliciously dark and beautiful and drips with her brand of raw sexuality and femininity. This song is mood," she says. For Vidhisha Dixit, 26, *All The Time* by Jeremih "brings out the stripper" in her.

However, creating a sex playlist is trickier than one might think. Your partner might not be into your kind of music, or music during sex in general. In such cases, a playlist might just spoil the mood. Dr Sakshi Tickoo, sexuality counsellor, explains, "Music is an aphrodisiac. But it might not work for everyone. That is why sex playlists can be tricky and sometimes even act as a deal breaker."

Tickoo does not have a set sex playlist. "For me, my mood decides the playlists or music rather than the other way round. My forever favourite track, however, would be *Until I Found You* by Stephen Sanchez."

Tanu Tiwari, 30, is on the other end of the spectrum. "To be honest, music distracts me more than turning me on. The ambiance and mood matter while doing it more than the music."

Well, music or not, sex is one of those things that should be comfortable, and enjoyable. And if you ever need a song to turn up the heat, you can always sample some from our recommendations.

The LOUIS XIII Gastronomy-India experience will be available for the general public once a month at Jamavar at The Leela Palace, New Delhi, from November 25, 2022 to March 2023

LOUIS XIII Gastronomy:

The Story Of A Perfect Pairing

Cognac maker Remy Martin brings together a French and Indian chef to create a dining experience that raises the bar on alcohol-food pairings

Chef Romuald Feger

Curated dinners that pair high-end alcohol with specially prepared cuisine is a growing trend in the major metros in the country. The challenge for chefs, sommeliers, and spirit experts involved in the process is to get the combination right. While continental cuisine with its minimal use of herbs and spices is relatively easy to pair with wines and whisky, Indian food is a wholly different ball game. The complex array of tastes and the wide variety of spices used makes every pairing exercise a very demanding task requiring a full range of expertise for a gastronomically authentic and enjoyable experience.

It wasn't surprising then that Malo Le Mestre, the brand ambassador in India for Maison Remy Martin, the famous French cognac house, spent months looking for the right chef and restaurant to do a food pairing involving north Indian cuisine and the much-coveted LOUIS XIII, the crown jewel in his brand portfolio. The quest for him was to find the 'perfect culinary pairing'. "We wanted to create an authentic experience that combines the best of Indian food with the best of French cognac," Malo says.

Remy Martin takes food pairing very seriously. The Maison runs a full-fledged kitchen in its hometown of Cognac in Southwestern France, with a team of chefs under Executive Chef Romuald Feger. They are constantly at work to create gastronomical pairings that complement the aromatic richness of the brand's cognacs.

Chef Feger's work becomes even more important when it comes to LOUIS XIII. Pronounced as 'LOUIS trez' and named after the 17th century French monarch who gave the drink its current status rivalling wine and whisky, it is made from the distilled white wine made from the highest quality grapes grown in the Grande Champagne area of Cognac. Every year, since 1850 when it was first created, the master distiller at Remy Martin has been putting away the best of these distilled wines to age in century old French oak casks. The bottled LOUIS XIII is a blend of nearly 1,200 of these wines, aged varyingly from 40 years to some that are more than 100 years.

Chef Shamsher Ahmed

The LOUIS XIII bottle is as important as the cognac inside. The crystal decanter was designed in 1850 by Paul-Emile Rémy Martin (who also created the cognac), based it on a 16th century metal flask. Each bottle is still mouth-blown by traditionally skilled French craftsmen at the best of French crystal houses including Baccarat, Saint-Louis, and Cristallerie de Sèvres. With so much that has gone into its creation, it is not surprising then that LOUIS XIII is among the most expensive liquors in the world. A 700 ml bottle is priced in India at upwards of Rs 2.5 lakh, and not easily available. Limited editions, periodically made by the company, are even more expensive.

LOUIS XIII's extraordinarily complex combination of aromas include myrrh, honey, dried roses, plum, honeysuckle, cigar box, leather, figs, and passion fruit. For its Indian brand ambassador Malo Le Mestre, the challenge was to find an Indian chef who would work with Chef Feger to create a French style meal with courses of traditional dishes that complement each of these distinct characteristics of the cognac.

In January this year, he zeroed down on Shamsher Ahmed, the masterchef at Jamavar, at The Leela Palace in New Delhi. With nearly three decades of experience spread over dozens of restaurants across India and abroad, Ahmed's long experience placed him in an ideal position to work with the finicky French chef.

They worked together for nearly nine months to achieve the gastronomic perfection in each dish that became part of an elegantly plated five-course affair that is now available for everyone to taste once a month at Jamavar. Starting with an Amuse Bouche or a starter, entree, soup, main course, and dessert, each course paired with 30 or 60 ml of LOUIS XIII. Vegetarian options were also created as substitutes for each meat or fish-based dish.

The aim behind the dishes in each course was to match it with a specific characteristic in the prized cognac. Based on chef Feger's conception, chef Ahmed would suggest individual dishes for the course following which there would be a detailed back and forth on each aspect of the dish, the ingredients, the spicing, etc. The experiment would be complete only when both the chefs were convinced, they had what they were looking for. "With this collaboration, I truly experienced what pioneering means," says chef Ahmed. "As culinary explorers, chef Feger and I did numerous experiments to confirm which sensations each ingredient, each cooking technique, each texture would offer once paired with LOUIS XIII. I am very proud that we succeeded in uniting LOUIS XIII and Indian cuisine in a way that allows each to fully express its opulent, dense and vivid profile while complementing each other."

Every dish in the meal is a variation on a popular north Indian preparation. The starter is a crispy Kale Patte Ki Chaat that is primed to highlight the cigar-box smokiness of LOUIS XIII, while the exquisite Burrada Smoke Sandal Himalayan Trout, which is part of the entree, is spiced just about enough to bring out the woodiness in the cognac. The soup, Sakora Aab aur Millet Raab, is a reinterpretation of the barley and corn soup made during winters by Rajasthani villagers. While it is traditionally served with dollops of ghee, the quantum was adjusted on chef Feger's suggestion to prevent it from overpowering the cognac. Similarly, the Ghosh Nalli Nihari in main course has been mildly flavoured to compliment the subtle spiciness of the cognac.

The meal is rounded off with Nimish Kesar ke Phool Aur Gulab Firdaus ki Lakeer, an exquisite variation of the Awadhi winter dessert made from milk foam that is aerated overnight in open pots to catch the dew and then whipped in the morning and flavoured with saffron and nuts. It was by far the star of the show, and perfectly balanced the floral aspects of cognac, a perfect ending to a thrilling experience.

For chef Feger, it was a rewarding experience. "Beyond the intense and demanding work, we performed with chef Ahmed on pairings, he says, "What I truly appreciate about this creation is that we went beyond the usual concept of a fusion of cultures, wishing to respect the true nature and identity of Indian cuisine. It is not an adaptation to serve the purpose; it is the reveal of an unexplored and subtle reality."

The LOUIS XIII Gastronomy-India experience will be available for the general public once a month on a pre-booking at Jamavar at The Leela Palace, New Delhi, starting November 25, through to March 2023. Expectedly, it won't come cheap. A dinner paired with 30ml of LOUIS XIII costs Rs 30,000 plus taxes, while one with 60ml of LOUIS XIII is priced at Rs 50,000 plus taxes. If you are feeling rich and want the whole 700 ml decanter to be shared among friends and family (upto eight people), the price is Rs 4.5 lakh plus taxes. ⊖

With so much that has gone into its creation, it is not surprising then that LOUIS XIII is among the most expensive liquors in the world

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Crafted Water For Your **Best Whiskies And Gins**

Estuary bottled water is specially crafted to help you get the best out of your expensive single malts, vodkas, and gins

By Murali Menon

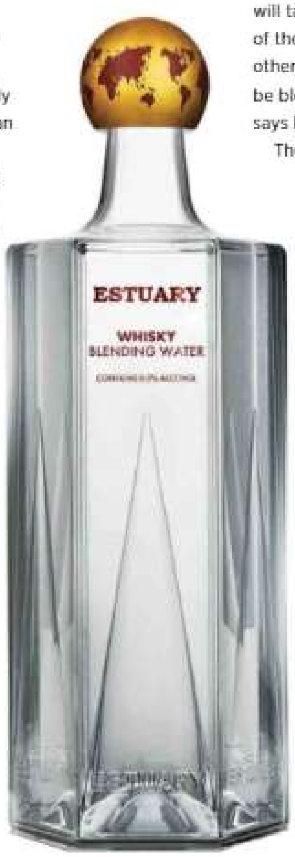
I'm not sure if it was psychological, but my Glenmorangie 10 YO did taste better when I added a dash of Estuary Single Malt Blending Water to it. My friend's Stranger & Sons gin, too, exhibited more bounce than usual. Maybe Estuary's blending water, also available for gins and vodkas, does make a difference, or maybe not.

Launched during the lockdown, Estuary, its makers claim, is the world's first 'blending water', which they describe as a "new category of crafted water, with precisely sculpted TDS (total dissolved solids) levels, that makes spirits taste smoother and more flavourful". Different blends are used for different alcohols. So, Single Malt Blended Water is different from Whisky Blended Water, which is different from Gin and Vodka Blended Waters.

Estuary was a singular product until earlier this year when competitors appeared on the horizon, both nationally and globally. Devashish Kamdar, the man behind this "new category of crafted water", sees the competition — and the consequent expansion of the category — as a vindication of his belief that the world does need a blending water.

Kamdar, who is the scion of an Ahmedabad-based bridal jewellery business, is no whisky snob — he mostly sticks to Black Label and Glenfiddich 15YO. But he often wondered why the malts he imbibed tasted better at certain places, and why they tasted different depending on the water used (tap and bottled).

The Scots have long suggested that the dash of water in your whisky should be from the same source as the whisky, and, if you are considering it, there are companies such as Uisge Source, which offer "different spring waters from private sources close to some of the popular distilleries in three of Scotland's whisky regions." A case of 12 50ml Speyside Water costs £36 or about Rs 3,300. A pack of four 750 ml bottles of Estuary Single Malt Water is priced at Rs 1700, Whisky Water at Rs 1500, and Gin and Vodka at Rs 1300.



The pricing has nothing to do with the source of the water and is made using a patented process. "There is a great variability in the properties of water. Spring water will be "thick", natural mineral water will be thinner, while mountain water will have a lot more total dissolved solids or mineral content than either of the two. The same whisky will taste different, depending on which of these waters you use. Estuary, on the other hand, has been specially crafted to be blended with different kinds of spirits," says Kamdar.

The groundwater undergoes seven layers of distillation at the company's facility in Jamnagar, Gujarat, and these include reverse osmosis, ozonisation, fortification, filtration, and UV ozonation. "Estuary's blending water is mineralised and crafted to be had with either whisky (both single malt and blended), or gin, or vodka. It helps to open up, for instance, a whisky's flavour profile. There is actual science behind it," Kamdar says.

According to Kamdar, Glenmorangie tasted noticeably different because Estuary's blended water helps disperse the flavours evenly across the palate. The stronger the dispersion, the better the flavour, and this is achieved through 'hydrogenic composition' which, he says, refers to the effortless manner in which the blending water amplifies the flavour molecules in the spirit and perfectly balances the whisky.

"When whisky is poured into a glass, the heavy ethanol content rises to the top. Estuary breaks through the ethanol barrier to enable you to experience the flavour-producing compounds better. It opens up the palette experience," says Kamdar. Estuary's blending water for gins works in a similar fashion — highlighting notes of the botanicals in them.

Two and a half years after its launch, Estuary is now available in 4,000 outlets across India, including premium hotels and restaurants in the country. The blending water was launched in London in November last year and is also available in some of Singapore's top whisky bars. It was also the official blending water at the annual Scottish Whisky Awards last year and has been part of several whisky tastings conducted by the likes of the Single Malt Amateur Club of India.

Kamdar plans to take Estuary across the world in due course. "Estuary complements the entire alcohol industry. In Asia, on average, one would need 10 bottles of Estuary for every bottle of whisky. In the west, it would be less, but it's still a significant number. Which is why we decided to go in for a patented process, which can be applied to facilities in New York, or China, or Malaysia," he says.

(From L to R) Panelists Aman Thadani, Rohan Rehani, Karina Aggarwal and Aneesh Bhasin in conversation with our Deputy Editor, Suman Mahfuz Quazi

Raising A Toast To *MW* Raise The Bar

Earlier this month, our team put their heads together and kicked off this magazine's latest property, *MW* Raise The Bar — a series of curated events highlighting the latest developments, key contributions, noteworthy additions and important players in the areas that we write about regularly as a publication.

For our first edition, we raised the bar (quite literally) as we converged at Soho House Mumbai, our venue and food partners, for a meaningful, and yet, uber fun panel discussion. This was punctuated with cocktails crafted by our presenters, Terai Gin and Svami Drinks. And in a way, the night doubled up into a free-flowing session, allowing luminaries from the alco-bev and food space to come together under one roof and exchange ideas about a common passion.

Our aim, when we started putting *MW* Raise The Bar together, was to simply understand what has fostered the burgeoning rise of homegrown spirits in India. And who better to do that with than those who've led the made-in-India movement in spirits? The resulting panel comprised a crop of determined entrepreneurs, who have not only managed to carve a niche for themselves as individuals; but also, helped build brands that have paved the way for a new era in India's alcohol industry. It included: Karina Aggarwal, founder of Gigglewater Beverage Concepts and Vice President at Terai Gin, one of the country's leading craft gins, at the moment; Aneesh Bhasin, who has reshaped the way we look at mixers in India with Svami, a company currently valued at Rs 100 crore; Rohan Rehani, the co-founder of Moonshine Meadery, which essentially kickstarted a whole new segment with their flavoured meads (fun fact: he was on *Shark Tank India*, too); and Aman Thadani, who is at the helm of Fullarton Distilleries, which owns not one, but three alcohol brands spanning rum, gin and whisky with Segredo Aldeida, Pumori, and Woodburns respectively.

From the birth of local entrepreneurship in India's alcobev industry to brand creation and diversity, the role women have played in shaping these changes, socio-cultural aspects influencing the creation of a product, the challenges associated with licensing and trademarking, and the impact of state-led monopoly for alcohol distribution on independent brands — we answered and learned about all this and more. While also, managing to create a window into the world of alcohol entrepreneurship, and by extension of that, into entrepreneurship itself. In between, there were platters of food, specially made tipples, and conversations between like minded individuals from the F&B fraternity that we hope to bring together in a greater way in the future.

Raise The Bar presenters, Terai Gin and Svami, created a special drinks menu exclusively for the event

Having executed a successful, first edition, we're now beginning work on building *MW* Raise The Bar into something bigger and better so that it can lend itself to areas that have been integral to *MW*'s editorial over the last two decades, growing into a logical extension of the magazine and all our collaborators across segments and disciplines.

As a leaving note, I have to add — by the time we had covered all our bases, most inside the room were already a few down, as they say. So, we thought: a few more wouldn't hurt anyone, and the rest is a very blurred history.

ALL IMAGES: SALT AND CEMENT

We had a packed house with top restaurateurs, chefs, and liquor brand and service-related business owners

Some of the top restaurateurs and chefs graced the event with their presence. (L to R) Sagar Neve, Seefah Ketchaiyo, and Niyati Rao

Restaurateur and owner of Plural in Mumbai, Vedant Shah quizzes panelists

Jovita and Jordan Mascracenhas, founders of Bartisan

(L to R) Keshav Prakash, founder of Vault Fine Spirits, Suneeta Kanga, wine and spirits professional

Restaurateur Jason Esteves

(From L to R) MW team members, Samreen Tungekar, Radhakrishnan Nair, Tulsi Bavishi, Suman Mahfuz Quazi and Sharan Sanil

Restaurateur Shaan Gidwani

Chinsi, founder of Bombay Duck Brewing

Divyanshu Mishra, Brand Ambassador, Stranger & Sons

(L to R) Chef Seefah Ketchaiyo, chef and restaurateur Urvika Kanoi, Tripti Bhatia Gandhi, founder Detales Communication, chef Karan Bane

Ashwin Ramachandran, chef and co-founder, Milliways Inc

First All-Electric **Mercedes AMG Is Stunning**

The EQS 53 AMG is the most un-AMG-looking AMG. It is futuristic looking, powerful, and the most aerodynamic car in the world

By Anubhav Sharma

The first all-electric Mercedes AMG, built on an all-new, pure electric platform is mega, whichever way you look at it. AMGs have thrilled enthusiasts over decades, with raw power and their glorious soundtracks. All petrolheads have, somewhere deep down, accepted that electric is the future, but must the hallowed three-lettered brand go that route too? Well, the said brand has gone down that route and the result is astonishing.

The EQS 53 AMG is probably the most un-AMG-looking AMG, although photos do not do it justice. In person, it is quite futuristic, with its sleek and low-slung look and the beautiful Panamericana grille lends a little bit of menace. Built on the brand-new Electric Vehicle Architecture platform, the EQS is the most aerodynamic car in the world with a drag coefficient of just 0.2. The AMG here is at .23 Cd, thanks

for the large 21-inch wheels. The design is more avant-garde than traditional, and fitting in a car which could help shape the future of EVs from the three-pointed star. On the AMG, the performance sedan look works, I feel, and will appeal to a niche audience. Only those comparing it with the S-class may be disappointed, otherwise, the EQS 53 AMG is quite impressive in person.

If the exterior looks futuristic, the interior is definitely that. The 56-inch hyperscreen is the hero in the cabin, more like three heroes since with three separate screens, in one massive glass panel. Regardless of that technicality, it is a wow feature. The central screen is 17.7 inch, which has everything you need; the main functions are always easy to reach. The front passenger gets a dedicated screen too through which she or he can access navigation, music, vehicle info, and other controls. The third screen is the digital instrument, which we have all seen in newer Mercs that come with MBUX. The UI is genuinely next-level, with almost no latency. Since the future will have no buttons, the EQS 53 AMG doesn't too. It is all a game of touch, slide, and click, which works well. The AMG-ness has not been forgotten here, despite the tech overload, and there are dedicated performance menus and even the AMG Track Pace data logger for when you hit a track. Fat chance of that happening with most buyers, but the car is ready if you are game.

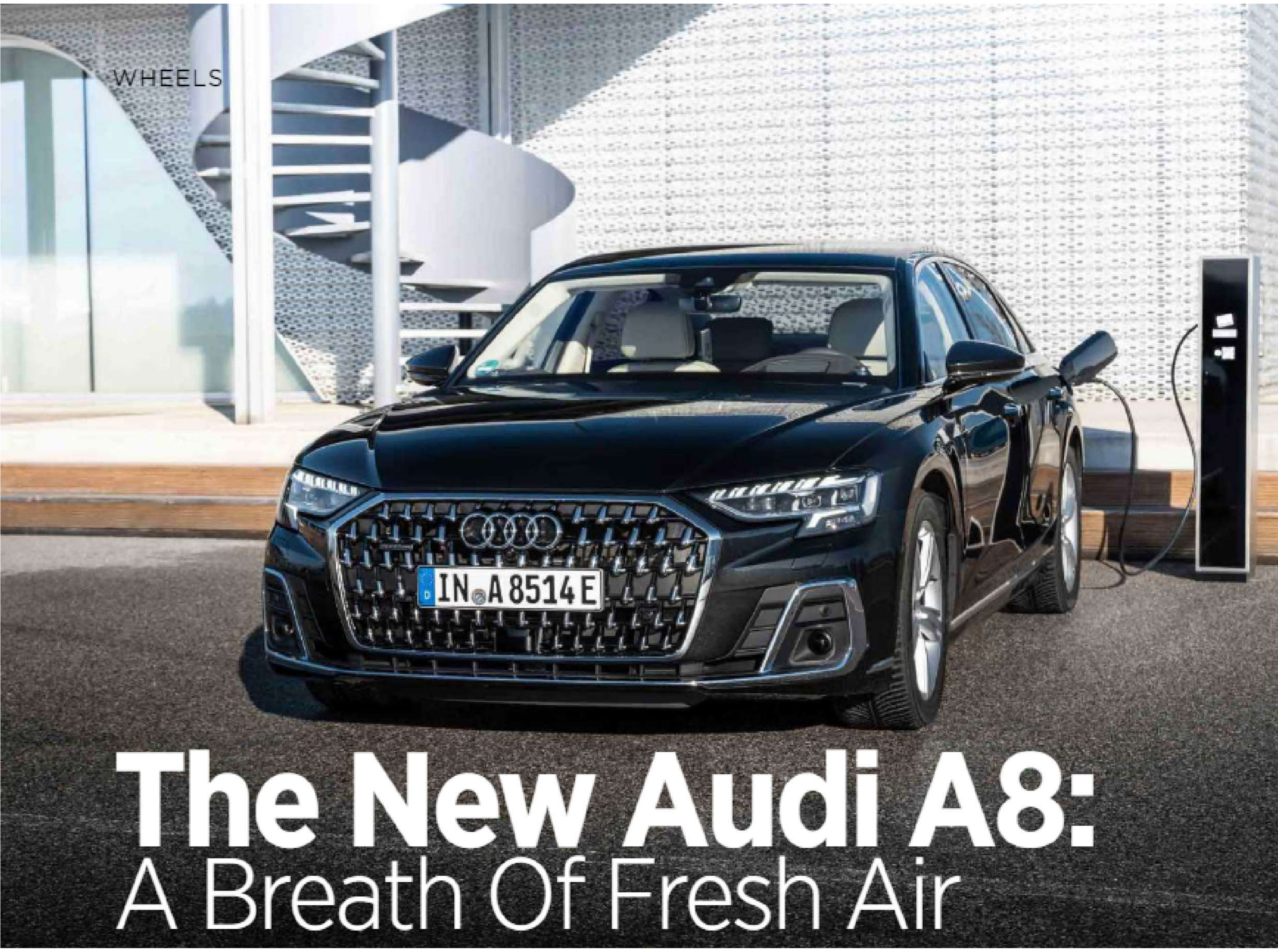
The cabin has everything you expect in a flagship Mercedes, and some more. The seats are comfortable, with the front ones getting massage and ventilation whereas the rear seats only get ventilation. Probably Merc's attempt to remind you to be in the driver's seat, it is an AMG after all. If you are more inclined towards the rear seats, there is ample legroom and headroom. The 17-speaker Burmester surround system is fantastic as expected, and the dedicated touchpad at the rear lets you customise your ambiance. The ride is not floating-on-a-cloud like in the S-Class, but not bone jarring like in a sporty sedan too. The 21-inch wheels are the reason, I feel, but it is not a deal-breaker. With a claimed range of 523-580 kms, range anxiety is dealt with easily. Mercedes Benz India has announced their plans of setting up a network of fast chargers across the country, which should make cross-country trips in the EQS easier.

All the futurism comes at a price, naturally, and at Rs 2.55 cr (ex-showroom) the EQS 53 AMG is affordable only for a few

EQS 53
S EQ 134E

However, if you are the type who is more interested in the performance aspect of the EQS 53 AMG, you will not be disappointed. The numbers are impressive on paper and staggering in real life. 761hp and 1,020 Nm of torque. Yes, that is not a typo; the EQS 53 AMG comes with a four-figure torque number. In a sedan, with no engine! This is hypercar territory and the EQS delivers, and how. The acceleration is brutal and addictive. It takes you more than 3.5 seconds, the first time, to figure out how you are over 100kmph. It is one smooth, loaded whoosh and it is a lot of fun. You have to remind yourself that this car weighs over 2.5 tons, and yet it does these runs effortlessly. There is a Race mode too, only when the battery is charged over 75 per cent but I don't think you will need it. Sport+ and Comfort are fast enough. Will you miss a rumbling V8 when you do these runs? I did, but the way the EQS 53 AMG launches, over and over is nothing short of impressive. If pure speed is your kick, this car can be your fix.

It is not an inexpensive fix, as you may have figured out by now. All the futurism comes at a price, naturally, and at Rs 2.55 cr (ex-showroom) the EQS 53 AMG is affordable only for a few. Out of those few also, some might choose the EQS 580 which is almost a crore less than the EQS 53 AMG and perhaps the more sensible choice if you want a luxurious green car. The EQS 53 AMG is more than a luxurious green car though; it is a glimpse into the future of performance cars, today. It is proof that a green future need not be a slow one, and that gives me hope.



The New Audi A8:
A Breath Of Fresh Air

Has Audi done enough to excite buyers with the new A8 to draw them away from the updated S-Class and the upcoming 7-Series?

By Anubhav Sharma

In a world besotted with SUVs, and now EVs, a new sedan is like a breath of fresh air these days. The new sedan in this case happens to be the flagship from Ingolstadt, the new A8, which makes its debut in the long-wheel base version. Sensibly, I should add, considering the buyers for these cars are usually driven around. Has Audi done enough to excite buyers, and more importantly, draw them away from the updated S-Class and the upcoming 7-Series?

The A8L has always been an understated car when it comes to looks. Clearly, someone felt it was time to change, and the new A8L comes with a lot of chrome. The massive, shiny grille has chrome studs, and there is some more below the grille, stretching across the front. Too blingy? Not really, as it gives the car a slightly imposing look up front. The party trick on the outside is the digital Matrix headlamps, with 1.3 million micromirrors no less, with fantastic throw and spread. The digital part gives you multiple choices for light play when locking and unlocking the car, fun stuff for your Instagram if you are into all that. The Rear gets digital OLED lights, plus a strip of chrome, with options of different light play as well. Overall, the refreshed look works well and gives the A8L a good road presence.

The interiors are classic Audi, minimalist but luxurious. There is everything you expect — dual screens, virtual cockpit, and high-quality switches — but it is the slim aircon vents that are unique, as they are motorised. Audi offers a ton of personalisation options for those who may

find this interior a bit staid. The approach seems to be more focussed on comfort than making it exciting, and that's a good route in this segment.

One thing you cannot complain about in the A8L is space. There is a lot of it and there is a reason why the seat behind the front passenger is called the Boss seat. With an optional relaxation package, the Boss seat truly earns its moniker. With the press of a button, a rather long one at that, the front passenger moves all the way ahead, the rear entertainment screen adjusts to an optimum angle, there is a fantastic foot massager, a 17-speaker Bang & Olufsen audio system, ambient lighting and more. A tablet controls all the important functions and the rear entertainment can be connected to Wi-fi, in case the traffic is making you miss your favourite show. Cocooned in luxury, I doubt you will care about plebian stuff like traffic though.

The luxury isn't limited to creature comforts, as there is a creamy 3.0-litre V6 turbo-petrol engine under the hood, which makes 340hp and 500Nm. This may not sound impressive in today's world, but a 0-100 time of 5.7 seconds is, for a full-size luxury sedan. The performance is in line with the overall philosophy of the car, comfort over aggression. Triple-digit speeds are a breeze, but there is no drama. I would have liked the rear-wheel steering to be standard; it is an option, since the A8L is a big car to manoeuvre. The adaptive air suspension wows you when you approach the car, the car rises every time to make ingress easy, and aids in making the ride quality better too. Not many filters inside this cabin, and the comfort is truly next level.

While this is not an all-new A8L, Audi has done what it needed to make the car more competitive in this segment. Despite being a CBU, Audi has kept prices competitive with the A8L priced from Rs 1.29-1.57cr, ex-showroom. Some of the optional equipment like Matrix lights, predictive air suspension, and the relaxation package as standard would have given the A8L an edge over the competition. If you find something missing, like ADAS, don't lose hope as some features should come in the full model change, whenever it happens. Till then, the A8L is a competent option for those who want a car that looks and feels expensive, while being tremendously comfortable. ⊖

One thing you cannot complain about in the A8L is space. There is a lot of it and there is a reason why the seat behind the front passenger is called the Boss seat

6 Reasons Why **Mahindra Scorpio-N** Is Worth The Two-Year Waiting Period

We spend time with Mahindra's hot-selling new version of Scorpio to find answers to the question on the minds of a large number of SUV buyers in 2022. Is it worth the wait?

By Afzal Rawuther

Two years is a long amount of time when you are waiting for your new car to be delivered. But somehow, that doesn't seem to faze buyers of the Scorpio-N. This is especially true of the base Z2 and the diesel trims of the Scorpio-N, the variants most in demand. Mahindra, over the last couple of years, has introduced three outstanding products to the market. As a result, their order books are overflowing and the Scorpio-N, just like the XUV700 that debuted a year ago, is selling like hotcakes.

So, what is it that has customers flocking to Mahindra showrooms? We spent some time with the top-of-the-line Z8L 2WD variant of the Mahindra Scorpio-N and here are the six things we absolutely love about it.

DESIGN REFRESH

With something that has been around for more than two decades, a design update is a hard job to do. Err too much on the safe side, and you can have a product that will be called boring, and try to be too radical, and it can just as easily be ridiculed. Mahindra has tried to find a middle ground. The muscular, brawny silhouette is retained but some of the design characteristics of the Scorpio have been given a miss. This means that things like the stacked tail lamps are there, they no longer have a quirky shape and light signature. Depending on who you ask, the Scorpio-N's tail lamps look like that of the Maruti Suzuki Wagon R or of any number of recent Volvos.

That said, the Scorpio-N gets a far more mature overall design than the Scorpio ever had. The classic two-box shape is retained but the SUV doesn't appear as squared off. It is smoother and details are better integrated with the overall design. The headlights are slimmer, and the grille, too, is restrained, with the only details of note being the vertical slats and the new Mahindra logo finished in chrome. Lower down on the bumper, you will find the fog lamps and DRLs.

There isn't as much plastic cladding around the car, and on the sides, the flared wheel arches add some character to the sides, as do the 18-inch alloy wheels. The Scorpio-N is 206mm longer than the last-gen car and also gets a 70mm longer wheelbase while being wider by 97mm. The result is an SUV that definitely looks larger and that is part of its appeal.

SPACE AND COMFORT

With the increased dimensions and some very good packaging, the Scorpio-N does feel roomier on the inside than its predecessor. You still get the commanding driving position that has been a hallmark of the Scorpio. However, you no longer have to sit bolt-upright like before. There is enough and more cushioning for the front seats and it is easy to settle into a good driving position. While you are there, you are met with higher quality materials and fit and finish that are eons ahead of any Scorpio before this. Everything, from the switchgear to how the dashboard is put together, screams quality. Several elements have been borrowed from the XUV700 and that can only be a good thing.

The middle row can be had with captain seats or a more conventional bench setup. The captain seats are obviously the more comfortable option and do improve access to the third row. It has to be said that no matter what you decide to go with, there is ample head, knee, and shoulder room in the second row. The seats themselves are very comfortable with good support all around. Head to the third row and you will find that space is now at a premium, and it is nowhere as much as it was in the last-gen Scorpio. You do sit facing forward, but the space is best suited for kids or adults with a smaller frame, and that too only for shorter journeys. It is evident that Mahindra has made a choice to focus a lot more on the middle row and has compromised when it comes to space in the third row, even though the car is now much larger overall. With the third row up, luggage space is also severely limited. If you aren't someone who typically travels with six or seven people on board, you'd be perfectly comfortable in the Scorpio-N.

PACKED WITH FEATURES

As you settle into the driver's seat, you are greeted by the chunky steering wheel (borrowed from the XUV700) with the twin peaks logo. The upright dash features an 8-inch touchscreen infotainment display with Mahindra's AdrenoX suite. The UI is easy to use, and the touchscreen is fairly responsive as well. There is wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay and the connected car features include remote access, an SOS function, and some good old-fashioned Alexa integration. The instrument cluster, unlike in the XUV700, gets analogue dials with a 7-inch display between them. There are other useful additions like a wireless phone charger, a sunroof, auto headlamps and wipers, a powered driver's seat, drive modes for the diesel and off-road modes for the 4WD variants. There are front and rear cameras and sensors along with parking guides on the Scorpio-N that make it a lot easier to live with on our congested roads. Mahindra's commitment to safety is evident and the Scorpio-N comes with ESC, hill descent and hill hold, six airbags, a tyre pressure monitoring system, and a drowsiness detection system.

POWERFUL ENGINES

You can choose between a 2.0-litre turbo-petrol and a 2.2-litre turbo-diesel engine for the Scorpio-N. First seen on the Thar, the motors produce 203hp of power and 380Nm torque and 175hp of power and 400Nm of torque respectively. As with all other aspects of the Scorpio-N, the engines have changed tremendously in character. The petrol is the punchier of the two, although both the petrol and diesel engines return commendable 0-100kmph times (the diesel is a second slower with a time over 11 seconds). That's seriously impressive for such a large SUV. But it is not the performance to be had that will blow you away. It is how Mahindra's latest SUV delivers it. The Scorpio-N is a step-up when it comes to refinement, especially so for a ladder-frame SUV. All that power, both for the petrol as well as diesel, is delivered effortlessly in the lower half of the engines' respective rev ranges. This, coupled with the far more sophisticated and refined powertrains (our test car was a torque converter automatic; both the petrol and diesel automatics are paired to torque converter units), ensures that the drive is a lot more relaxed.

Scorpio-N gets a far more mature overall design than the Scorpio ever had. The classic two-box shape is retained but the SUV doesn't appear as squared off

EXCEPTIONAL RIDE-QUALITY

This is easily the aspect that stands out the most to me. Mahindra has made huge strides when it comes to the ride quality of its SUVs. And when I say huge, I mean *huge*. The Scorpio-N remains unbothered no matter what you throw at it. Mahindra has worked hard behind the scenes to make this possible. The Scorpio-N is a staggering 500kg lighter. The suspension is all new as well. There are double wishbones up front and a five-link set-up at the rear which uses a Watt's Link set-up to better manage lateral movement under load. In addition to all that, there's frequency-dependent damping. What all of this translates to is a much more comfortable ride over our terrible roads than any other car in the price range. The Scorpio-N seems composed on seriously bad stretches of road, and you can carry a good amount of momentum effortlessly. There is a bit of bounciness at low speeds, but that is perfectly acceptable for an SUV like this. All the work going into the suspension also means that the Scorpio-N handles corners very well. There is sure-footedness when taking corners at a speed that was lacking in previous generations.

COMPETITIVE PRICING

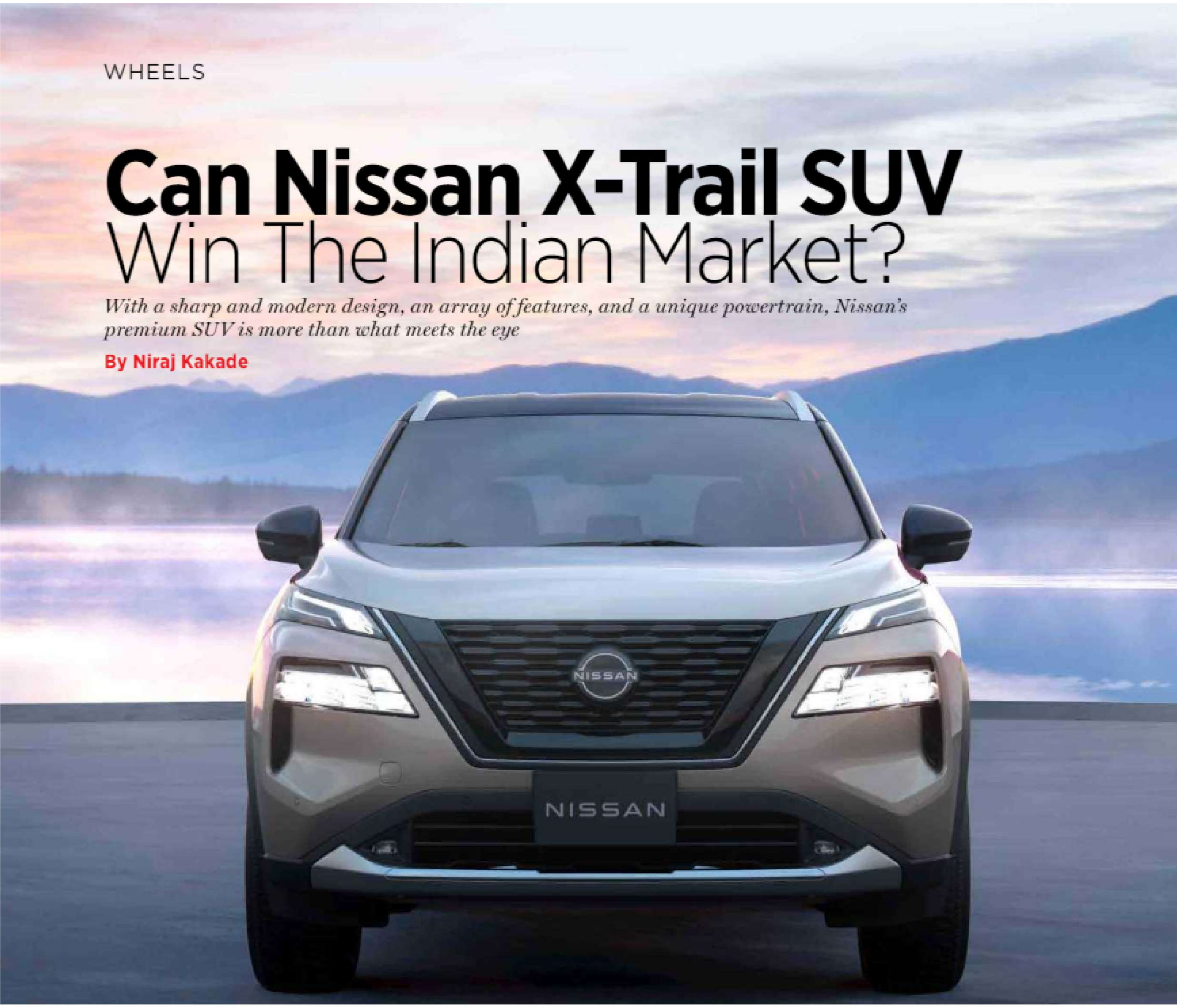
There is no conventional ladder-frame SUV currently in the price range to compete with the Scorpio-N. Starting at Rs. 11.99 lakh (ex-showroom) for the base petrol variant and going up to Rs. 23.90 lakh (ex-showroom) for the top-of-the-line diesel AWD with automatic transmission, the SUV straddles more than one segment. Its competitors are all in the monocoque SUV segment. The Tata Safari, given its butch looks and size, is probably the closest competitor. But even it loses out when it comes to what Scorpio-N offers in terms of features.

For most buyers, it might just be a choice between the XUV700 and the Scorpio-N. They are similarly priced but are different when it comes to the architecture, with the XUV, as a result, being more sophisticated and the Scorpio-N being a lot more rugged. That's a good problem to have for Mahindra.

Can Nissan X-Trail SUV Win The Indian Market?

With a sharp and modern design, an array of features, and a unique powertrain, Nissan's premium SUV is more than what meets the eye

By Niraj Kakade



The Japanese company, Nissan has been facing some choppy waters in the Indian market for some time now, with only two products on offer — the Magnite and the Kicks. While the former has been due for an update for a long time, the latter is based on an ageing platform in need of an overhaul. So, in a bid to reaffirm its footing, the brand showcased three of its globally popular SUVs last week: the X-Trail, the Qashqai, and the Juke. However, out of three, only the X-Trail is likely to come to India. But with a barrage of SUVs to choose from, what does the Nissan X-Trail offer to stand out from the competition?

Many might not remember but the X-Trail was sold in India in its first- and second-generation avatar. While we never got the third-generation offering, the fourth-gen

model appears to be the company's next big bet. Available in both 5 and 7-seater options, the SUV is built on the company's CMF-C platform; it comes with a sharp and premium design. The front features a large grille, reminiscent of the Nissan Kicks. It is flanked by two sleek pairs of LED headlamps with DRLs. From the side, you'll notice a strong profile, with a broad C-pillar, helping it in giving the appearance of a rugged SUV. A similar theme is carried on the rear as well, with the layered tailgate design and a chunky lower-skid plate giving it an appearance of a no-nonsense SUV.

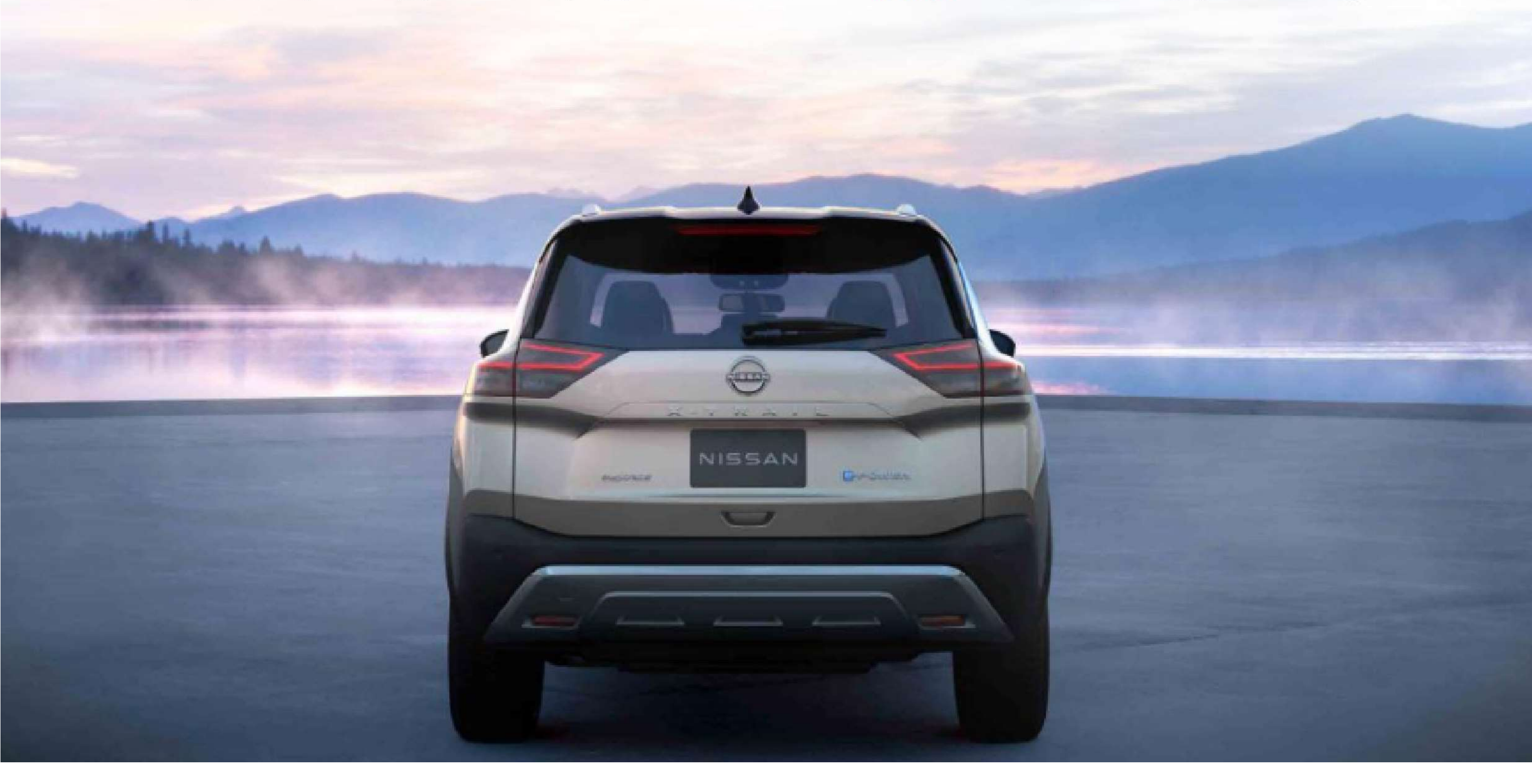
The pictures don't do justice to the X-Trail. The SUV may seem compact, but it is long enough to house a desi family. In terms of dimension, the X-Trail measures 4680mm in length, more than the new Hyundai Tuscon (4630mm), but only marginally less than the updated Skoda Kodiaq (4699mm). However, the X-Trail does have a smaller wheelbase compared to the two at 2705mm. When it comes to boot capacity, the Nissan SUV again lags behind its competitors offering only 177 litres of space.

Fortunately, the X-Trail does make up for the lack of practicality by offering a barrage of electronics. The international-spec model gets three independent displays — a 10.8-inch head-up display (HUD), a 12.3-inch digital driver's aid display, and a 12.3-inch touchscreen infotainment system, with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. Nissan has also packed in a premium Bose sound system along with features like wireless phone wireless charging, tri-zone AC, gesture-controlled tailgate, a panoramic sunroof, powered front seats, and Nissan's connected car tech. The SUV also gets a suite of advanced driver assistance features (ADAS), which includes adaptive cruise control, blind-spot monitoring with rear cross-traffic alert, a 360-degree camera, and auto emergency braking. While we don't have the confirmation, we expect all of the bells and whistles to be carried over onto the India-spec model as well.

Things get interesting when it comes to the power train. Apart from its conventional 1.5-litre turbo offering with a mild-hybrid system, the X-Trail is also offered with something called an "e-power" variant. Unlike a strong and mild-hybrid powertrain, the e-Power trim uses the 1.5-litre petrol engine as a generator to charge the batteries, without driving the wheels. This helps it on running on pure electricity while offering a significantly healthy fuel economy on paper. When it comes to numbers, the e-Power variant makes over 204PS and 216PS of power on 2WD and AWD drivetrains respectively. It remains to be seen which powertrain option will make it to our shores.

> *In a bid to reaffirm its footing, Nissan showcased three of its globally popular SUVs last week – the X-Trail, the Qashqai, and the Juke. However, out of three, only the X-Trail is likely to come to India*

Nissan has stated that it is actively testing the fourth-gen X-Trail for the Indian market, which could hint at a possible mid-2023 launch. As far as pricing is concerned, expect it to cost around Rs 40 lakh mark (ex-showroom). Apart from the X-Trail, the automaker has, in recent times, showcased the Nissan Qashqai, which gets a mid-sized SUV design and a similar e-Power motor. Then there's the Nissan Juke, which looks, unlike any other compact SUV we've seen before. However, the chances of both the Qashqai and the Juke making it to our shores are slim to none, with Nissan confirming that the two models were only showcased to gauge market interest.



In loving memory of **'celebration'**

No matter what part of the world you're reading this piece in, there's a festive nip in the air from last month to the next month, and party season is in your face. But what if celebration doesn't mean the same thing anymore? Let's begin here: it's not a bad thing

By Samreen Tungekar

Circa 2008. Good old Orkut days. It was almost December, and 15-year-old me couldn't wait. Christmas is coming — festive cheer et al. What about New Year? How to make this one *really* stand out?

Circa 2016. Instagram just introduced Stories. It was almost Diwali. 23-year-old me was a bit bummed. Living away from home, no one around, and even Domino's isn't delivering because festival of lights. This isn't how it's supposed to be, I'm bawling, alone. I should be celebrating — dressing up, eating a different kind of processed food than pizza. What is this life.

Come 2020. The world is silent. Festivals come and go, one after the other. 27-year-old me, and all of you reading this, are at home — some on Zoom parties, some dressing up just to feel something, some trying to find ways to trick curfews (judging you if you were one of them). Hopefully, next year we'll be celebrating, everyone thinks. Sure, but maybe never in the same way.

Present moment. I'm 30. The pandemic's urgency is over, we've all learnt the do's and dont's of living our lives with coronavirus. But, the last two years were no joke. From losing people to the virus or just from your life, work-from-home induced longer working hours, no sense of time and space, mental bandwidth reduction — we are not the same people that we were in 2019. And it's not the worst thing to happen.

I was rewatching this episode from *F.R.I.E.N.D.S*, where they all have Thanksgiving plans that, for different reasons, get cancelled. They're frustrated; everyone had these fabulous holiday plans with their families, skiing and whatnot. It's Thanksgiving, they wail. But eventually, they come around, realising that it's still the six of them, and they'd not have it any other way. It made me wonder if the pressure and definition of what celebrations

SHUTTERSTOCK

Here's to a lousy Christmas.
And a crappy new year.

should look like — intense, larger than life, glamorous — is just conditioning.

Let's break it down. We've all had our own versions of what we do during the festive season from September to December, from, say, Navaratri to New Year while growing up but somewhere, they coincide. Card games, *pujo* plans, caroling, the ever-famous 'biryani *khila*' — were our touchpoints. Social media has made tradition cool again — we're now the generation that's hosting card parties night after night during 'Diwali week', planning Christmas brunches that are definitely going on the gram, and so on. It's great if you are genuinely the person who likes their festivals to look like this, but if, like me, you have a nagging feeling that this doesn't feel like you anymore, listen to it. I know I did, and the clarity is life-changing.

I was extremely big on almost all festivals. As the child of an inter-religion marriage, we've celebrated Hindu and Muslim festivals with jest, and American pop culture made me (like most 90s kids) fall in love with December. Celebrating the New Year was huge in my family — we'd go for elaborate AF parties, dinners, you name it. I know where I come from, but I don't think I'm there anymore.

Social media has made tradition cool again — we're now the generation that's hosting card parties, planning Christmas brunches that are definitely going on the gram, and so on. If you have a nagging feeling that this doesn't feel like you anymore, listen to it

For starters, the people for whom we all were up in arms to make festivals exciting were my grandparents, and they're gone. Then, my mental health has had quite the graph in the last four odd years — oscillating from high-functioning depressive days to feeling like everything is great, from changing cities again when I didn't want to, to realising my toxic trait is biting off way more than I can chew. From my mental bandwidth to my boundaries outside my body to a new job to two years of being homebound with the folks after six years of living away, why am I even surprised that my idea of a 'rager' has evolved, and it is not bad at all?

For good mental health during the festive season and to adapt to your changing ways of looking at celebrations, the first step is to tune in. Grown out of card parties and drinking games? Stay back home, watch something you like. Hate the traffic, the noise, the need to please? Plan a trip with your closest ones, and travel. Want to meet your closest buddies without having to do the whole big, hectic, exhaustive party season? Host a close get-together with wine, some bites, and just hang in a comfortable setting. Take out a day for just yourself and do everything that you never have the time for, including going to that one restaurant you always wanted to, or the vintage bookshop, or just that curious corner with street food that you always cross.

And, cliché but effective, don't doom scroll your social media because that has a way of making you feel like shit even if you're in the middle of exactly where you want to be.

Just because 'it's not the same anymore', doesn't mean it's a bummer.

Happy party season — however you define it.

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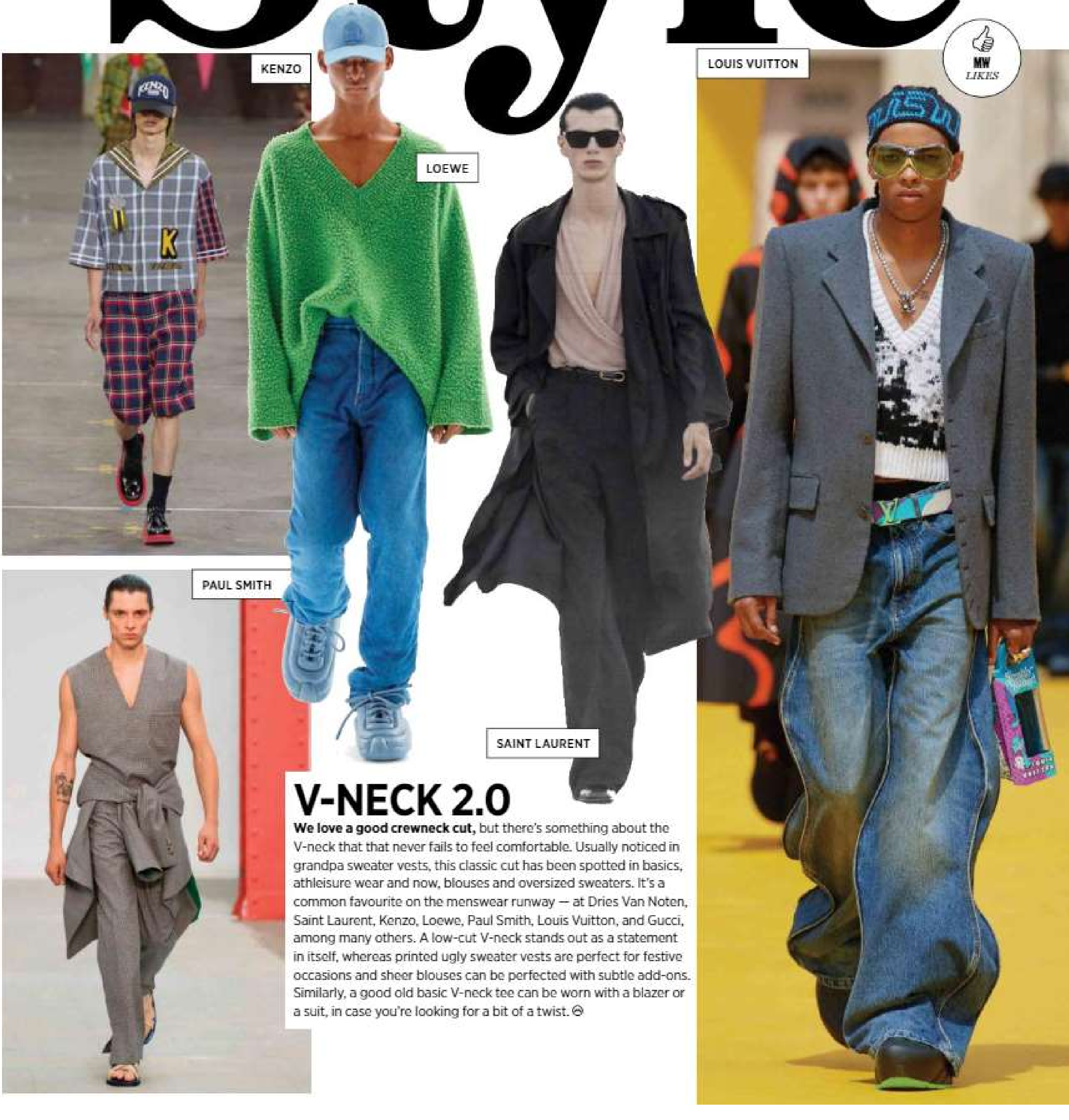
Style

INSIDE:
COLOURS OF THE SEASON
THE NEW AGE GROOM



V-NECK 2.0

We love a good crewneck cut, but there's something about the V-neck that that never fails to feel comfortable. Usually noticed in grandpa sweater vests, this classic cut has been spotted in basics, athleisure wear and now, blouses and oversized sweaters. It's a common favourite on the menswear runway — at Dries Van Noten, Saint Laurent, Kenzo, Loewe, Paul Smith, Louis Vuitton, and Gucci, among many others. A low-cut V-neck stands out as a statement in itself, whereas printed ugly sweater vests are perfect for festive occasions and sheer blouses can be perfected with subtle add-ons. Similarly, a good old basic V-neck tee can be worn with a blazer or a suit, in case you're looking for a bit of a twist.

GUCCI DEBUTS PALACE COLLECTION

PALACE
GUCCI

After Adidas x Gucci, the Italian label has collaborated with British brand, Palace. Creative director Alessandro Michele teamed up with Palace Skateboards and its founders Levent Tanju and Gareth Skewis for a collection that dropped exclusively on Gucci Vault — the Italian label's experimental online space launched in 2021 — that is dedicated to vintage curation of designer items, and special drops. The collaboration brings Italian and British aesthetics together to bring a hybridised take on both creative universes. Inspired by Palace's own back-catalogue and Gucci's undeniable, cross-generational influence on youth culture, the collection focuses on the street — a place of fascination for Michele, where fashion comes alive.

The pieces consist of the rodeo, skate and sport aesthetics, all fused together in pieces that reflect the multifaceted identity of modern street culture, from soccer to house music, to moto-riding. Palace Gucci epitomises fashion without hierarchy, liberated and democratic. A gender-fluid collection, it encompasses accessories and clothing, including Palace's debut in women's ready-to-wear designs. The collection is available retailed online exclusively through Gucci Vault. For the first time since its introduction, Vault will be seen offline and IRL, through pop-up stores in Paris, Milan, Tokyo, Osaka, and Bangkok, as well as takeovers of Palace stores in London, New York, Los Angeles, and Tokyo.

ADIDAS, BALENCIAGA, AND GAP CUT TIES WITH KANYE WEST

Kanye West, also now known as Ye, has been facing flak for quite some time. The rapper and fashion designer came under fire for making antisemitic remarks and for making a model walk down wearing a 'White Lives Matter' shirt at his Yeezy fashion show, leading to a major outrage. Adidas is likely to suffer a loss of €250m after stopping production of items under Yeezy and by putting an end to all of the musician's payments. Similarly, Balenciaga, whose fashion show Ye opened in Paris in October with a surprise modelling appearance, deleted him from its pictures and videos of the show. Prior to Ye's comments, he called off his partnership with GAP but in recent days, the brand sent out promotional emails for the Yeezy Gap hoodie, which have now been halted completely. According to *Variety*, West's worldwide music sales declined by 17.5 per cent, per Luminate, while streams dipped 2 per cent, through October 20. The rapper's controversial remarks about Jewish people also led to his Twitter and Instagram accounts being restricted.

ADITYA BIRLA FASHION RETAIL LTD SET TO BUY MAJORITY STAKES IN THREE BRANDS

Aditya Birla Fashion Retail Ltd is all ready to buy majority stakes in three fashion startups, creating India's largest portfolio in the fashion and lifestyle industry, as reported by *Live Mint*. According to the reports, the venture is in the final stage of discussions to buy a controlling stake in Hyderabad-based Urbano Fashion, which is run by Imperial Online Services Pvt. Ltd; Hyderabad-based Pratyaya E-Commerce Pvt. Ltd, which markets under the brand name Nobero; and Ahmedabad-based Awesomefab Shopping Pvt. Ltd sells its products through its platform Veirdo.com.

pantaloons

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FENDI INTRODUCES THE PEEKABOO BAG

Going back to its roots, celebrating its heritage and strongest codes in a modern way, Fendi presented the Peekaboo ISeeU Forty8, the new member of the Peekaboo ISeeU family. The latest launch appeared as a large, structured shopper, a practical yet elegant weekender bag to accompany the man on the move during his 48 hours away. Ensuring capacity and comfort thanks to its wider size, the new traveller bag maintains the classic details of the Peekaboo ISeeU, yet combined with new features. The classic twist lock closure is featured along with a new functional zip which, together with the leaflet sides with button closure, provides even more space. Flat, light handles are designed to carry the bag by hand, while a fabric strap can also be added to wear the bag cross-body or on the shoulder. The signature interchangeable pocket of the Peekaboo ISeeU is now attached in the one-space inside of the bag through a special mini strap, serving as an additional pocket or as a removable pouch. Paying homage to the Italian house's DNA, the signature FF jacquard logo appears for the first time on the Peekaboo ISeeU, which has been paired with smooth premium leather in a sophisticated sand colour. The monogram also appears in a contemporary black tone-on-tone version in premium leather. The collection is available in Fendi boutiques worldwide and on the online website.

ABRAHAM & THAKORE CELEBRATES 30 YEARS IN FASHION WITH NEW COLLECTION AT LAKME FASHION WEEK

Abraham & Thakore completed 30 years in fashion, this year. The designer duo celebrated this occasion by presenting their Autumn-Winter '22 Collection called 'Time Travel: Past, Present and Future' at the Lakmé Fashion Week in partnership with the Fashion Design Council of India. The designer's signature black and white designs have stood the test of time for three decades and its affordable luxury wear is rooted in a fabric-first approach where heirloom textiles are reimagined into designs with a twist, for modern-day Indians. This season, the designer label combined contrasts, for example, black x white, East x West, heritage x contemporary, feminine x masculine a step ahead, by presenting a line-up that's timeless yet timely. "We are excited to be showing this season at Lakme Fashion Week in partnership with FDCI. The collection is an eclectic mix of our stylish and trend-agnostic styles. We have worked with weavers using different techniques from all over the country and created a modern, simple collection that we think is timeless," Abraham added. Along with the Autumn/Winter 2022 collection, they presented a sneak peek of the Spring-Summer '23 collection and a few of their most iconic archival pieces. True to their signature style, there were high-contrast monochromes looks along with a perfect balance of comfort style. The range extends to daywear, workwear, and occasionwear that complemented urban India aptly. The new collection features sustainably made saris, textured and 3D jackets, kurtas, kaftans, tunics, palazzos and *churidars* in fabrics like organic cotton, *habutayi*, and *mashru* silks, lenzing eco Vero, and Tencel.

DEEPIKA PADUKONE BECOMES CARTIER'S NEW BRAND AMBASSADOR

Deepika Padukone has been appointed as Cartier's new brand ambassador. The French luxury brand announced the news on Twitter by sharing Padukone's black and white picture sporting a diamond necklace from the brand. The caption read, "The Maison is pleased to welcome the Indian actress, producer and philanthropist Deepika Padukone to the family as its newest ambassador." The actress now joins other famous celebrities including Emma Chamberlain and Blackpink's Jisoo, as a part of the latest face of the brand. Earlier this year, she attended a Cartier event in Madrid, alongside notable celebrities like Yasmine Sabri and Rami Malek. Cartier's Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, Arnaud Carrez says, "We are delighted to welcome Deepika Padukone to our community of extraordinary talents. As an inspiring actress and committed philanthropist, Deepika embodies Maison's spirit and values of celebrating creativity, universality and open-mindedness."

LOUIS VUITTON LAUNCHES INDIA EXCLUSIVE CAPSULE COLLECTION

Louis Vuitton launched an exclusive collection for its Indian audiences — a capsule collection of women's shoes. This shoe collection boasts of contemporary styles with a heavy focus on magenta colour, which is suitable for all occasions. The striking magenta, also known as classic '90s Rani Pink, the hue pays an ode to India's royal significance and spirit of celebrations. With a strong relevance to the Royals Of Rajasthan, the shade is widely seen in royal jewellery, architecture, décor, textiles and handicrafts. The special collection by the French Maison sees sophisticated pieces such as Shake block heels, Sparkle slingback pumps, Revival mules, Time Out sneakers and cult classic LV Archlight slingback pumps. The limited-edition capsule collection launched on November 4, 2022.

GETTY IMAGES

Going Natural **This Winter**

Plastic and synthetic are on their way out from fashion faster than most other industries across the world. As international brands gradually shift focus towards natural fibre, we look at your winter options, including those that are lying mothballed in your wardrobe

By Magandeep Singh

SUTTERSTOCK

I end up attending most seasonal previews by the big high-street and luxury brands, and this year, while at the Uniqlo event, my mind was drawn to something a bit different. For one, they didn't send their ultra-lightweight down jacket as a small token of their appreciation (aka journo-gifts). Instead, they sent a lambswool sweater. Now, this was quite a throwback to a time when natural fibers ruled winter roost. This is neither a commentary on Uniqlo, their down jackets nor their lambswool (which is really soft and warm), it was merely a mild wake-up call, one that made me dig deep (introspectively as also in my cupboard) to pull out all the various assortment of natural fabrics that I have used over the years (and still do) to keep me warm. Here is an assortment of what I found:

- **Waxed Cotton:** As made famous by the UK Royal family and James Bond, this is possibly the classiest way to stay dry and consequently, snugly warm, through all types of weather. Sure, it won't stand up against a Category 5 storm but with a waxed cotton jacket, you start and build on a lasting relationship. Every season to give it a wash, and then reapply the gently heated wax, going over it twice to ensure coverage and evenness — no man-made fabric jacket can afford you such quality time. And there is nothing classier to flaunt, period.
- **Merino:** One of the finest breeds of sheep, the fine yarn (20-micron thread or lower) makes it a strong, durable, and never-itchy form of wool that promises to keep you warm and cosy through the worst of winters. Well-treated and spun versions show good elasticity and won't lose shape over time. Dyeing it obviously affects the durability but it's a worthy compromise in the interest of style.
- **Cashmere:** Going up a notch in premiumness (or down in microns, depending on how you see it), we arrive at cashmere. Merino is fine fabric and the only thing that makes cashmere dearer is the rareness of this animal (Hircus goats) from which the fleece is drawn. That and also the fact that it pills much lesser than merino over time so although merino is more durable, Cashmere can hold it better. To me, a bit of pill-fuzz is sometimes like the patina that most natural materials acquire over time so it can be something to find a certain sense of nostalgic comfort in.
- **Pashmina:** Also special, and rare, this is the same as cashmere but is worked differently (read that as spun much finer, as fine as 16 microns or thinner). Also, pashmina is so commercially exploited a term that today it is hard to even for people in the trade to tell the real McCoy from one with rabbit fur. When it's done right, it is soft, light, lustrous, and has an exquisite fall. When mixed (or shall I say, spiked), it pills, sheds, and sticks like cheap confetti.
- **Alpaca:** This time-honoured fabric from Peru is still quite artisanal in the way it is procured and prepared. The fleece from this animal is rather special, managing to attain even more fineness than most sheep wool varieties. Compared to cashmere, this fabric pills lesser and is warmer, softer, hypoallergenic, and more durable. As for those who'll nitpick, they are also more sustainable (camelid) species than goats and sheep (as their grazing leaves less of an environmental impact). Just remember that there exist barely five million alpacas out there as contrasted against some 700-million-odd cashmere goats, and you can get an idea of just how precious this fabric is.
- **Mohair:** Obtained from the fleece of the Angora goat, this is as rare (if not rarer) than even alpaca. It enjoys all the properties as above plus it is lighter, crease-resistant, more adept at being dyed, and superbly resistant to felting. Our dexterity in learning to process it better has allowed us to use this in more versatile ways, else it used to be largely earmarked for furniture.
- **Vicuña:** This is perhaps as close to purchasing luxury in fabrics as one can go while staying on the right side of the law. Eponymously-named vicuña comes from a llama-like species found in the Peruvian Andes. From being an abundant autochthonous breed to an endangered one (albeit being Peru's national animal) the production is strictly controlled. One animal yield barely half a kilo of fleece and combined with the fact that it takes extremely long to grow, you can see why it can cost almost 10 times dearer than cashmere. And yet, vicuña is superlative to every adjective and qualifier I have used so far to describe any of the other types of fabrics so it's worth the investment.

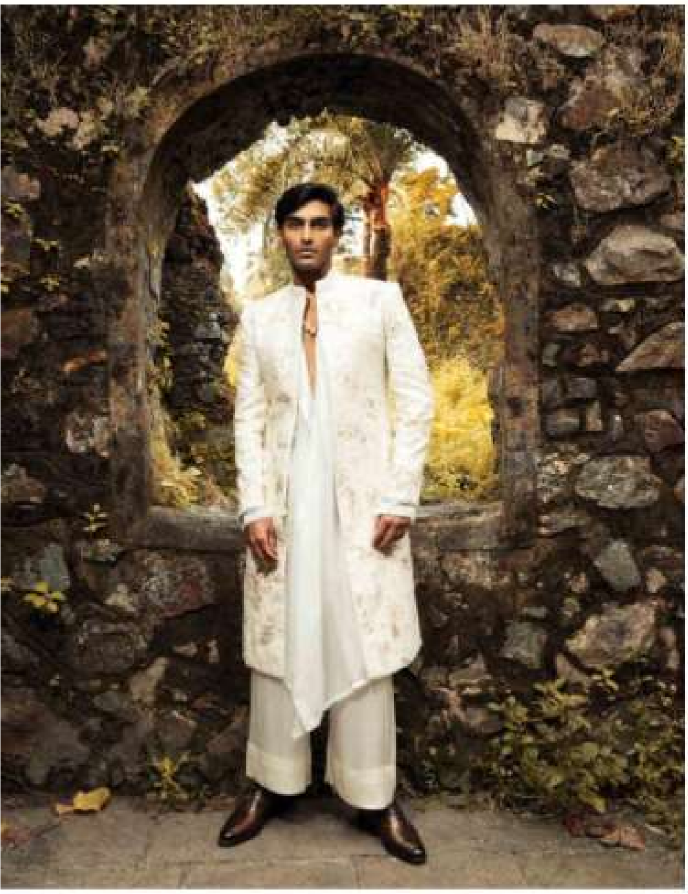
So, thank you to Uniqlo, I guess, for making me reminisce over some much-cherished pieces from my wardrobe while also adding to it in the most organic (lambswool) way. ⊖

STYLE FILE

RAHI CHADDA

Rahi Chadda is effortlessly stylish. You might've spotted him in Netflix's Masaba Masaba, *but he's also a fashion influencer, global beauty entrepreneur, and multi-hyphenate in every sense of the word. We get a low down of his fashion choices, favourite purchases, and more*

By Pooja Prabbhan Srijith



"The best advice I can give is to not focus on trends. Understand what works for you"

What are you naturally drawn to in fashion?
My aesthetics are an amalgamation of who I am culturally. I am a British-born Londoner through and through, but my heritage is Indian and I am very much in touch with that. I am drawn to the unexpected in fashion.

Your most memorable collaboration to date?
Working with Dior Beauty and being the first South Asian Ambassador for them in the UK. Additionally, being featured as one of *Forbes* 30 under 30 under the category of fashion was an incredible achievement, too.

Your most coveted purchase of the year?
Flared jeans; they go with everything. I would probably be buried in mine. In terms of brands, I love Tods — the leather they use is divine, and their shoes are incredibly comfortable. They are my go-to.

One thing that fashion weeks have taught you?
Discipline and perseverance. As a creator, during fashion week, we're under an intense schedule. I've really learned to pace myself and structure and organise my time.

A vintage trend you wish you had the courage to sport?
I love vintage fashion, particularly high-rise trousers. I find that the fashion from that era also had a lot of odd combinations, which surprisingly worked. Different textures, colours, and patterns would be layered into unique styles by men. Now, I find we are more inclined towards and comfortable with monochromatic outfits.

Are you an online shopper? Which websites do you trust?
I do prefer trying clothes on before purchasing them. I'm not one to invest in fast fashion so for me., it is quality over quantity, always. I enjoy looking at the collections on sites such as Farfetch, Browns Fashion and MyTheresaMen, though.

Brands that have never let you down?
Dior's La Collection Privee has been my trusty range to choose my scents from. The perfumes are very unique and incredibly long-lasting. Ambre Nuit is a great scent for both men and women.

Three things you always consider before buying an outfit, and feel other men should too?
Not three, but one. The best advice I can give is to not focus on trends. Understand what works for you. Understand your body type and which clothes can enhance certain features. We want to be confident and shine.

A fragrance we'd always find on your dress draw?
Dior Beauty Sauvage Elixir.

A fashion trend you'd never endorse; not even for a million dollars?
Socks and sandals.

A priceless gift you're the owner of?
I have jewellery pieces that have been passed down to me from my mother, but my favourites are her pearl necklaces. It continues to be timeless and elegant, and yet, playful at the same time. And with genderless fashion in vogue, they can double up as versatile pieces, in so far as men's jewellery goes.

True luxury for you is?
True luxury today is something that feels timeless, of good quality, and sustainable. The definition of luxury has evolved and it's about savouring each purchase. Mindless consumption is on its way out and true luxury is slowly being processed.

GUCCI'S TAKE ON LUXE TRAVEL

If you're revenge travelling, chances are you need a cool set of luggage pieces to make your travel easy. Gucci has introduced Gucci Valigeria — a collection for those who love travel culture, and everything about it

Whether it is about hitting the slopes, running errands in a foreign land, or having an in-flight add-on, your travel accessories can make a lot of difference. Investing in pieces that go a long way can be fruitful, and Gucci has found a way for you to do that with 'Gucci Valigeria' — a heritage-infused travel collection.

The origins of travel in the Italian Maison go back a long way. When Guccio Gucci made his way to Paris and London, he started off as a porter at The Savoy, admiring the concept of travelling. These profound experiences led to him inspiring his first travel suitcases, trunks, bags, hat boxes, and many others, founded in Florence. Similarly, in 2022, we are experiencing a revolution in travel, and the reimagination of luggage accessories seems like an ideal fit.

For Gucci Valigeria's campaign, creative director Alessandro Michele sets the campaign in a dreamlike dimension that goes beyond the boundaries separating it from reality to recount a present built on the possibilities of the imagination. Lensed by Glen Luchford, featuring actor, screenwriter, director, and musician Ryan Gosling, the travel collection brings out a journey created by intuitions and endless possibilities.

In a press note, Michele explains the campaign concept: "Travel for Gucci was never purely physical. Gucci is the brand that accompanied the artists, writers, actors, and directors of Hollywood on their journey. This is why I wanted the advertising campaign to recount a situationist dimension where the protagonist traverses a "non-place" that is first and foremost a mental place, the same as those who, in the past and present, choose Gucci because they grasp the significance of creativity used to build imaginary places. And it is for this reason that a Gucci suitcase appears as a magical suitcase."

> *All the pieces from Gucci Valigeria are crafted with heritage-infused design elements*

Catering to every type of traveller, the collection offers cabin-friendly pieces to trolleys, carry-on to carry-all duffle bags, and a variety of unique silhouettes including bowling bags, bowling totes, and box totes. The hard-case offerings include trunks, suitcases, and hat boxes with a hint of a modern take. The garment bags and beauty and jewellery cases are included in both hard and soft versions of the collection. All the pieces from Gucci Valigeria are crafted with heritage-infused design elements, including the GG monogram and the Web stripe, offered in soft and hard-sided iterations.

A classic yet timeless collection fitting the aesthetic of every individual for years to come.

ASK THE EXPERT

Wedding season's fashion and style conundrums, deciphered and explained by designer ***Arjan Dugal***

Arjan Dugal is known for his fresh take on Indian menswear and new approach with Indian silhouettes. The designer has dressed many celebrities like Ranveer Singh, Vicky Kaushal and many more

▶

What are the trends that grooms can try out in winter weddings?

Winter weddings are all the more fun. Have fun with layering, while keeping it classy. Keep the silhouettes classic and elegant with a great fit, and carry a *Kani* shawl or a *Jamawar* to complete the look. No broaches or shiny objects, less is always more.

▶

I want to wear darker shades for my wedding. What would you recommend?

Black is a classic, always has been, and always will be. Experiment with textures, self on self, bits of black *zari*, and always have something that keeps elegant and understated.

▶

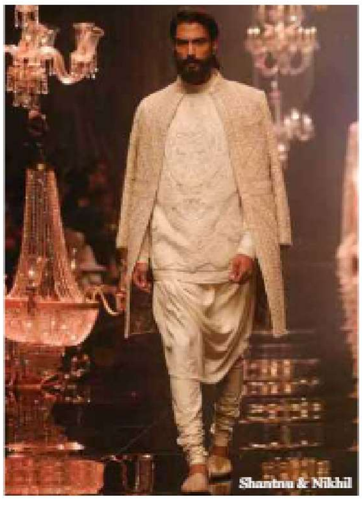
For my friend's wedding, I wish to wear printed kurtas. In what ways should I style them?

No way is better than the classic, but you can have fun with the kurta lengths. Get some height but shorten the kurta. Play around with fabrics. Something cool, something different. Also, flower power is in, big time. Use that.

▶

Would you recommend embossed prints for the wedding season? If yes, in what ways can it be included?

I don't recommend embossed prints. Less is more — embossing and then printing on the embossed lines is a no-no.



Shantnu & Nikhil

Arjan Dugal

▶

According to you, how can men include western jewellery while wearing festive looks?

I'm a jewellery fanatic. I love wearing a simple yet easy elegant bracelet, maybe in a neutral colour. Also, I'm a big fan of cufflinks, so incorporate cuff links with your kurta cuffs. It looks fly.

▶

I wish to invest in a good pair of wedding footwear that will go for all occasions. What would you recommend?

I wouldn't recommend a single pair, but maybe two. Split it between a pair for the day and a pair for the night. Nice black shoes with a heel (not driving shoes) and maybe a pair of modern mojris for the day in a light shade.

▶

Sneakers with kurtas/sherwanis are trending. How can I wear them without overdoing it or looking out of place?

It's a trend, it's cool and I like it. Why not? Let's keep things fun. Don't overdo it with too many colours and if your sneakers do have colour, try complimenting it with a part of your outfit.

▶

For my pre-wedding celebrations, I wish to do something different than the usual. As a designer, what would you recommend?

I would recommend finding something that resonates with you. It could be a colour, a fabric, or even where you're from. Amalgamate it for you. There's no one more original than one's self, and then come sit with me, and we'll design something fun.

Pawan Sachdeva

▶

As groomsmen, what colours can be opted to match with the groom?

I think you need to compliment the groom, not match. I have been a fan of ivory my whole life. It's so understated, and makes everyone look like a million bucks. Just keep it classy with a simple handloom *chanderi* or a geometric *banarasi* weave.

▶

In what ways are grooms making an effort to dress up compared to two decades ago?

In certain areas, tradition is paramount, so it hasn't changed much. But now it's all about creating a story for the function. It's definitely more adventurous and fun, and men now are okay with experimenting. So, from silhouettes like Indo-western to a fun pocket square. It's all fair game now.

The Colour Wheel
Of Fashion In 2022

Pantone may pick one shade a year, but not the fashion world. This winter, experiment with a new version of green, red, and dopamine hues

By Sanika Achrekar

Gone are the days where one solid colour dominated an entire fashion week, or a whole season. What started off with the dominance of hot pink aka Pierpaolo Piccioli's introduction to the Valentino runway for summer '22 soon trickled down to fast fashion houses such as Zara, H&M, and Asos, among others, and was the beginning of the spinning of a new, more experimental colour wheel.

As we move into the colder time of the year, you can safely introduce some new, bold shades to your wardrobe. No, not black and maroon and safe shades. It's time to try some red, avocado green, and psychedelic pop.

The runways sported some classy red cashmere sweaters, puffer jackets, long overcoats, and metallic blazers at Paul Smith, Vetements, Jacquemus, Casablanca, Hermès, Fendi, Etro, and more. Similarly, avocado green made its presence felt at Louis Vuitton, Dior Men, and Gucci through suits, coats, and accessories. Rick Owens, Dsquared2, and Versace stole the show with their psychedelic shades.

Designer Kunal Rawal explains that while these colours have always been there somewhere in the background, they're being seen on the runway in a much bolder way, and the post-pandemic fashion frenzy can be credited for it. "The pandemic is not fully over, but there is more positivity and a lot of celebration in the air. People have had a lot of time to think and introspect, especially men who enjoy expressing themselves through fashion. The trend today is to be anti-trend, and we are seeing the rebellion in fashion choices," he explains.

He also credits these bright tones in menswear to how the definitions of being a man are changing. "People are putting more thought into their looks instead of just buying readymade looks off the rack. They're customising either the outfit or the way they wear it. Boundaries on how men should look and dress are being erased, and we will see a lot more fun beyond these colours in menswear yet," Rawal adds.

Overall, menswear is now moving beyond the earthy colour palette and entering into the wild pop-coloured zone for the last couple of years, with fashion houses and independent labels bringing a variety. "Designers have had a good run with the primary and secondary colours, and we need to experiment and push the boundaries of what colours we can work with. I, for one, welcome this new shade card. The reds and the greens have been a staple for me over the last few years so I'm not new to the colour game in that aspect. However, as far as psychedelic colours go, there's a fine line between making them look good versus obnoxious. For us, so far, we prefer pastels, and paint our colour palette with a conservative yet fun set of shades," explains designer Arjan Dugal.

The Indian wedding space has never shied from using vibrant tones — reds, yellows, pinks, and green have been a common factor in desi weddings. The colour experimentation is usually seen in pre-wedding festivities such as *mehendi, sangeet*, and cocktail, where the groom opts for all sorts of wild shades. Speaking of including these bright tones in Indian wear, Rawal thinks that the younger designers have made Indian occasion-wear cool again.

"Honestly, Indian wear has always been known for its celebration of colour, so all these colours are quite a natural fit for us. The real beauty of handwork and couture is the detailing that goes into surface textures, and more often than not, each of these textures has 7-8 colours mixed into it to achieve the desired

Prada

Bianca Saunders

Etro

GETTY IMAGES

John Richmond

Louis Vuitton

KH House of Khaddar

Arjan Dugal

detailing and intricacy of design. For me, these are colours that can mix very well in surface textures, which ultimately make it to the runway. Every designer has their way of using these colours and applying their aesthetic to them. Another fun way to incorporate such colours is in eye-popping linings, which can add a new level of fun and interest to the garments," he believes.

Vibrant colours are a great way to add spice to your outfit. Amritha Ram of KH House of Khaddar explains, "It's one of the reasons why we chose a colour palette of pop colours to showcase our collection at the Paris Fashion Week. As a designer, I look at what is happening around me for the colour palette inspiration and with the post-pandemic mindsight, I think it's the best time to build a collection using such colours. Moreover, the colour palette for the season largely depends on the design. You need to make sure that the colour palette matches your design's message and mood. You can include multiple shades at once with analogous colours. To use multiple shades at once, use colours that get along with each other. Opt for analogous colours if you wish to blend in and complimentary colours to stand out."

Another way to include multiple shades at once is by the good old art of colour blocking, or by adding accessories of similar tones. Dugal adds, "Colour blocking is a friend. Colours that go together, complementing shades, and friendly palettes are a way to play that game. You find the neutral shades you're working with this season and add your experimental colours to that."

Pick your pops, and shine.

Paul Smith

Versace

Dsquared2

FORM V/S FUNCTION: **THE WORKWEAR DYNAMIC**

With the change in work structures came the change in silhouette structures — and the result? Post-pandemic fashion is quite a mix of easy breezy clothing and formal pieces, creating a never-before-seen aesthetic. Here's how form embraced functionality, and created a new variety of regular clothing

By Sanika Achrekar

Dior

Louis Vuitton

Zegna

GETTY IMAGES

Fashion has gone through multiple phases in the past two years. Social media and TikTok took over the lockdowns, thus emerged microtrends, while the fashion industry woke up to realise that seasonless shows work best. But one of the most drastic changes were seen in workwear. One no more had a wake-up-and-dress-for-the-boardroom routine, and that made all the difference. Zoom meetings meant smart casuals and loungewear, which were major style trends that birthed comfort clothing. Think of a nice T-shirt or knit jumper along with shorts or regular joggers to deal with your work day, because who would really know what you are wearing?

Countrymade

We saw a jump in thrift stores and secondhand clothing because sustainability became the talk of the town, once again. Now in 2022, people are trying to incorporate pandemic-style trends into their everyday routines such as outfits for work, while running errands, and for outings.

"One of the biggest trends that caught a lot of attention during the pandemic was the emergence of athleisure, fuelled by consumer demand for comfort wear. It gained a lot of focus in the work-from-home days, but this trend has evolved further as people have now started incorporating various elements of athleisure at their workplaces as well," explains a spokesperson from Selected Homme.

The pandemic definitely brought about changes in consumer preferences when

Harago

Selected Homme

it came to clothing, the most significant difference being the choice of fashion while dressing up. Consumers have now become more experimental with their sense of style. People like trying new fabrics, newer and bigger prints, and incorporating subtle fashion elements. Another shift in fashion choices is the focus on sustainability. People are mindful while they shop, as they prefer buying long-lasting and timeless outfits.

A variety of brands also hopped on to curate workwear edits, including loungewear, athleisure wear, as well as smart casuals. Brands such as Uniqlo, Jack & Jones, United Colors Of Benetton, Zara, and H&M were among the many who offered separate edits of trends that were a part of workwear edits as well. While coming to the luxe bit of workwear, Balenciaga, Raf Simons, Zegna, Tod's, Carhartt, Yohji Yamamoto, Prada, and other regulars are known for this.

CEO & MD Mr Ramprasad Sridharan of United Colors Of Benetton thinks that the pandemic had varied effects on consumers in every segment. "Comfort was a key preference, which has affected industries across various segments. In terms of casual wear, the statement continues to drive as a trend of how people are styling themselves even today. In the Benetton Fall Winter 2022 Menswear collection, certain top wear pieces that have incorporated 'stretch' as a key comfort feature are Stretch Polo T-shirts, Supima Cotton T-shirts, Poplin Colour-blocked Shirts, Popcorn Crew Neck T-shirts, and Flannel Check Shirts. In the bottom wear category, relaxed fits have been incorporated with styles like Bi-stretch Flexi Waist Trousers, Relaxed-fit Lyocell trousers, and Lounge Denims," he adds.

Over the years, workwear has definitely become more lightweight, easy to wear, and travel-friendly. Additionally, this year, a big change that we have noticed when it comes to workwear is that formal trousers have overtaken denim, making a distinct style statement by incorporating catchy prints, wearing different-coloured formal trousers, and focusing on lightweight fashion. "A must-have oversized shirt or an oversized jacket is great to compliment your workwear. Another idea to amp up your style would be to put on a classic lightweight knit and pair it with a lightweight blazer and a clean pair of denim," recommends the Selected Homme spokesperson.

Cuin

Son Of A Noble (SNOB)

Another factor that has majorly influenced workwear is the average Joe's awareness of how their personality drives their style — be it conventional clothing or more expressive clothing within the guidelines of workwear. Cuin, a homegrown contemporary fashion label, focuses on curating timeless garments. The brand opines, "I feel that post-pandemic, people have stopped caring as much about dressing up. They care more about functionality, sustainability and durability now than ever. Style is moving towards being more comfortable. Work timings have become more flexible and people have started going out more right after work, so they want to wear clothes or silhouettes that are versatile, something that they can go out in but also have the comfort that working from home has gotten them to use."

> *"One of the biggest trends that caught a lot of attention during the pandemic was the emergence of athleisure, fuelled by consumer demand for comfort wear" — Selected Homme spokesperson*

Speaking of whether the workwear change is here to stay, Selected Homme believes that these changes have taken the fashion quotient up a notch. "We have been following the usual formula of pairing a formal shirt and a pair of trousers. It's great to have a change that swings the mood from the old days and makes way for the new generation who are more open to experimenting. This will increase people's confidence in their style, and ultimately inculcate a feel-good factor when it comes to dressing up," they opine.

Like our current work situation, workwear in the post-pandemic world is all about the hybrid mixture of trends and comfort.

Celebrating 125 Years Of **The Swiss Army Knife**

On the occasion of a historic milestone for the legendary Swiss company, an interview with Victorinox AG CEO Carl Elsener

The Swiss Army Knife is a global icon. What started as an outdoors pocket knife made specially for Swiss army officers has, over the last century, become an essential tool in millions of households around the world. The family-owned Victorinox AG sells more than 10 million little red knives in 400 different versions every year, across 120 countries globally. In 2017, the company reached the landmark of having sold 500 million Swiss Army Knives. Victorinox's product line, though, has over the last three decades diversified beyond the traditional Swiss Army, kitchen and professional knives, extending into watches, travel gear and even perfumes. The non-knife segment now contributes around 30 per cent to the company sales.

To celebrate Swiss Army Knife's 125th birthday, Victorinox AG CEO Carl Elsener, the great grandson of founder Karl Elsener, held a roundtable meeting with select media in Mumbai. Here are some excerpts from what he said.

The most famous knife in the world started life in 1897 as Swiss Officer's Knife, how did it become Swiss Army Knife?

Carl Elsener: My great grandfather who created the knife called it Swiss Officer's Knife because maybe he felt that officers should have a more elegant knife than the regular soldiers. He also felt that this knife could be used by anyone who wants to enjoy nature through camping and trekking. Then, during and after the Second World War, we were able to deliver the little red knife in big quantities to the Army stores of the United States. The US soldiers had picked up the knife while in Europe, liked it very much, and took it home with them, where other soldiers saw it and also wanted to buy. The name Swiss Officer's Knife was too long for them, so they just called it Swiss Army Knife, a name that has stuck since then.

At some point, you did introduce a USB stick in the Swiss Army knife. But beyond that how do you stay relevant in the digital age, where almost everything is run using a semiconductor chip?

CE: We are very positive and very optimistic about the future because from our experience, we can strongly see that the Swiss Army knife is as relevant in today's digital age as it has ever been. We are, of course, constantly developing our products to ensure that they stay relevant in the future for people from all age groups, including the young. The Swiss Army knife of tomorrow will not be able to call people or take pictures as these functions are incorporated into mobile phones, but we are certain that it will continue to support the mechanical aspects of our lifestyle in the future. Just from my own experience recently, my wife and I were hiking in the beautiful French countryside when we sat down to eat the cheese and apple we had bought in the morning. Luckily, we had the little red knife in our backpacks, and we were able to open the can, and cut the apple. The Swiss Army Knife is at the centre of family life when people gather together in the outdoors. It always comes very handy no matter the occasion.

What is the story behind your diversifications? You have watches, travel gear, and fragrances. In terms of categories, which ones are you very bullish on for the future and can you give us some preview of what is yet to come?

CE: In general, all product categories are important for Victorinox and all product categories help us to make our brand more visible. But of course, the Swiss Army Knife is the heart of our brand, and the inspiration for all the product categories.

For 100 years, Victorinox has been manufacturing pocket knives and household knives. Around the late 1980s, my father and I saw our product being imitated at a cheaper price in Asia. Though the quality was much lower, we were convinced that it will

improve, that the price will still be lower than manufacturing in Switzerland. Then we asked ourselves the question: what should we do to keep the manufacturing of the Swiss Army Knife in Switzerland, yet be successful and competitive in the global market? Our strong conclusion was that we need to invest in our brand and make our brand more visible, because the Swiss Army knife is very popular, but most of the time it's hidden in your pocket or in your bag. You do not see the brand, you do not see the product, and we really looked for ways to make our brand more visible. At the same time, we were approached by our dealers and retailers who talked to us about the success of Swiss Army Knife, and asked why we don't have other products that would fit our brand, that fulfil the same values. We then decided to ask the end consumers in our most important markets. We did get a big list, and on the top of these lists were products for traveling, for outdoors, and also watches.

In 1989, we started to diversify into watches by partnering with Swiss manufacturers who manufactured watches for other companies. We were quite surprised by the success of our watches. People who trusted the little red knife, now shared this trust with this new product category. Because of this success, some years later, we opened our own facility where we manufacture Victorinox and Wenger watches.

When I look at total sales today, the Swiss Army knives contribute about 36 per cent to the turnover. The next important product category is our household and professional knives, where we have seen very strong growth over the past 10 years. During COVID, it was the product category that was the least affected, because people had to stay home and do much more cooking than before. The households and professional knives today contribute roughly 34 per cent of the total sales. And then we have the watches. Their sales have been quite stable, and contribute about 10 per cent to total sales. The travel aid segment is also very important for us. During COVID, though, it saw the biggest drop. It contributes roughly 17% to total sales. The last product category is fragrances, which contributes three per cent.

The fragrance category came to us through our acquisition of Wenger, in 2005. Wenger is also a Swiss company with history and heritage that goes back 100 years, like Victorinox. It had a similar product line as ours, including household and professional knives, watches, travel gear, etc. Their small fragrance collection was quite successful in the North American market. This is how we added the fragrance collection to our portfolio. We see healthy growth opportunities for all our product categories across the globe. Our strategy these days is to focus on products for travel and outdoors, and for the kitchen and cutting. These are our three main focus areas.

How many Swiss Army knives are sold per year around the world?

CE: At the moment, we manufacture 45,000 Swiss Army knives and 90,000 household and professional knives daily. Every day, 135,000 different knives leave our warehouse. Each year, this translates into roughly 10 million Swiss Army knives, and 20 million household and professional knives. Our most important market is the United States. Germany and Switzerland are also very important. Switzerland especially for tourists amongst whom the Swiss Army knife is a successful souvenir product because it's small, and unlike chocolate, does not melt.

You are the fourth generation family member running the company. Tell us about your company and how do you keep your team around the world motivated?

CE: Along with my brothers and sisters, we are the fourth generation. We are 11 siblings: seven sisters, and three brothers. Eight of us work at Victorinox. We also have eight members from our fifth generation who are already working with the company.

The big motivation for our family and the team across the world is to continue our brand that has been developed by pioneers over generations who put their heart and soul into it. The other great motivation is to deliver to our consumers a product that for long has symbolised Swiss quality and reliability. Our corporate culture is based on seven values the founder of our company set out: openness, mutual trust and respect, gratitude, modesty, courage and responsibility.

"At the moment, we manufacture 45,000 Swiss Army knives and 90,000 household and professional knives daily"

How has India performed for you as a market? How is it different from the other foreign markets of the same scale?

CE: India, for us, is a very important market, and we are happy that we have a strong and motivated team under the leadership of Colonel Chandhoke. Our experience is that it is a very diverse market. We see a big potential here, and I believe we need a different approach because the market is not just in the main cities but also spread across other parts of the country.

What Maketh The Fashion Of **The New Age Groom**

While keeping traditions intact, menswear has managed to create a more personalised, experimental, and fun edge to aid the groom on his D-Day. Menswear designers in the space share their take

By Manish Mishra

Wedding-centric menswear has traditionally been synonymous with bandhgalas, sherwanis, and bandi jackets. However, in the last five years, this stagnant menswear space has evolved considerably with today's well-travelled and evolved grooms and their groomsmen opting for experimental and fun pieces, which are in sync with their core personalities. More and more grooms are opting for sheer organza kurtas, bandis and sherwanis with edgy cuts and draped pieces, which are rooted in tradition, yet look impossibly of-the-moment. For cocktails, one sees custom tuxedos tailored with dramatic lapels and worn with statement pin-tucked shirts and for sangeet, they no longer shy away from sporting head-to-toe prints with elan.

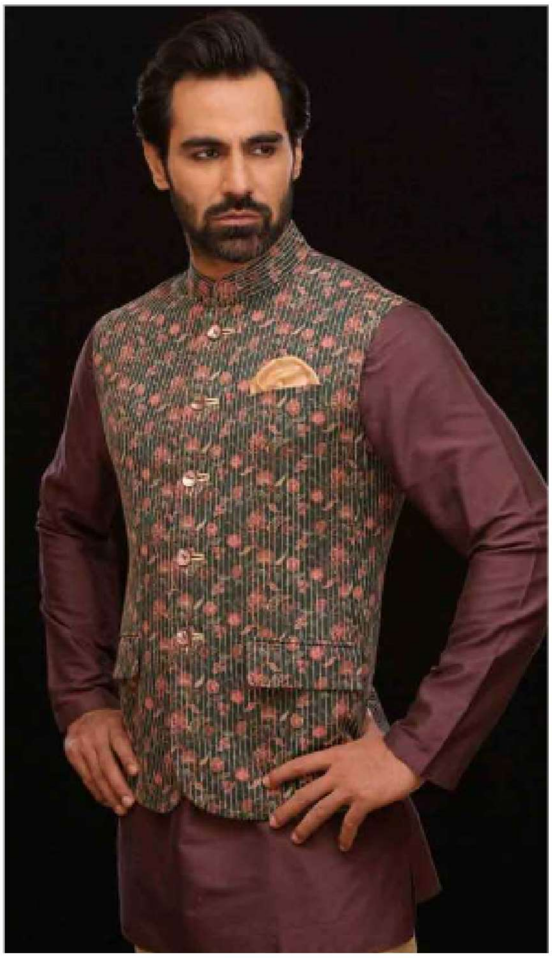
SVA by Sonam & Paras Modi, a label steeped in graphic prints and vibrant hues, has been creating twinsets, shirts, kurtas, and bandis in jewel-toned fabrics. Sonam Modi of SVA observes that more and more grooms are experimenting of late. "There was a time when grooms would opt for creams and pastels without giving it a second thought. However, of late, they're having fun with bold colours, experimental prints and new silhouettes. I wouldn't say their wedding shopping is trend based, but they definitely like to dress as per their personality, and further enhance it. A playful use of vibrant prints, layering etc. enables them to do that. Sheers pieces are gaining popularity in menswear, as a lot of boys want to stand out. Men are taking their fashion very seriously, and they like to invest in a carefully curated and elaborate wardrobe, with multiple statement pieces to stay ahead of the pack.

"I also see men buying less, but investing in few key pieces, which can be effortlessly styled in multiple ways. For example, a jacket that can be teamed with jeans, or a kurta," says Sonam.

Sva

When it comes to weddings, trousseaus, and ensembles, women's outfits have always taken centre stage. Traditionally one never heard words like a 'groom trousseau', and outfits for grooms always stuck to a similar mould of cuts and designs. However, the modern groom is slowly changing that perspective and has now become more open to experimenting, especially with a larger number of menswear brands emerging in the market.

Sva



Designer Raghavendra Rathore observes that grooms today don't submit to the rundown routine of beige and gold sherwanis. "With bespoke menswear garnering more interest, they're owning their personality and exploring their personal style, and taking trousseau decisions by analysing what looks better on them instead of settling for mainstream options. At Raghavendra Rathore Jodhpur, we offer a bespoke experience to add a personalised touch by offering what suits the individual's style and make him a customised look, which is put together especially for the groom," says Rathore.

Every bride dreams of having a wedding outfit that's one of a kind, so why not the groom? "With menswear brands presenting a plethora of options in colour, silhouette, and fabric, the modern groom is spoilt for choice and hence, tries to stand out more than fit in. Elements like personalisation and narratives that are closer to heart gain more prominence, adding to the experience and making the experience," adds Rathore, whose new capsule collection around the festive/wedding theme offers a varied colour palette that is experimental yet classic.

Raghavendra Rathore

The pandemic has been a huge eye opener for all of us. Somewhere, it has made us unafraid and willing to experiment, thus urging us to live life on our own terms. "The fashion and wedding industries were some of the worst hit ones, so a return to normalcy has also been refreshing and invigorating. All enquiries we get post pandemic as more focused on what an individual wants as a look for themselves and how it reflects their personal style, and tips to style rather than clients selecting looks from the catalogue in pre-Covid times and making a choice," notes Rathore.

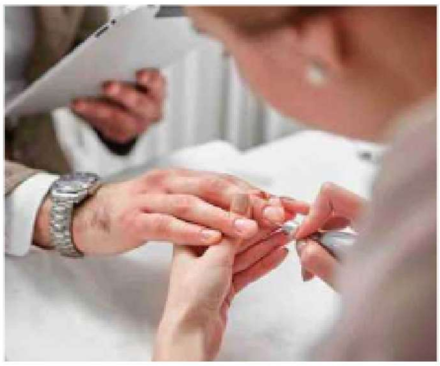
Designer Arjun Khanna seconds that. "Today, the grooms are seriously experimental in terms of colours and cuts. Today, the groom wants to have fun during his functions and be comfortable in what he is wearing. The trend nowadays is more tonal, tone-on-tone embroidery. Also, I see grooms deriving inspiration from Bollywood fashion. The groom has become more discerning. Most people now prefer destination weddings. The groom today likes to purchase two to three outfits instead of 10 different ones. The focus is more on after parties and intimate functions, proposals etc," says Khanna.

> *"With bespoke menswear garnering more interest, grooms are exploring their personal style, and taking trousseau decisions by analysing what looks better on them instead of settling for mainstream options" — Raghavendra Rathore, fashion designer*

Also, for their wedding shopping, luxists have been opting for trunks and wallets personalised with their initials. Louis Vuitton travel cases and billfolds with embossed initials have been in great demand. Moreover, Gucci's DIY service has garnered an incredible response, with consumers placing requests to get their initials embroidered on jackets and shoes. Zegna's VIP room lets one pick and choose fabrics from as many as 700 fabrics, which has been popular for luxe travel junkies.

All in all, the new-age groom is heading in a fresh new direction with his sartorial choices, giving the menswear market even more reason to continue to boom.

Manicured Hands On Deck, Please



There's nothing hotter than a man with well-groomed hands and nails. If you are new to grooming your hands and nails, we list everything you need to know about getting started

By Sanika Achrekar

Your hands have been everywhere — no pun intended. Picking up food, typing and doom scrolling all day on your phones, lifting weights at the gym, among many other scenarios. Rough, scaly skin on your hands, unkempt finger nails (ew) can not only be unhealthy for you but also for those who have to witness that sight. Luckily, these unnecessarily gendered hygiene ideas like getting a manicure are finally losing their stereotypes, and more men are understanding the need for grooming their hands.

Madhuri Agarwal, founder of Yavana Aesthetic Clinic, feels that following a basic grooming routine for your hands is essential. "Use hand washes instead of soaps as that will be less dehydrating for the hands. Secondly, choose a thick moisturising cream for the night, and a lighter lotion for daytime. Try to apply the moisturiser at least 3-4 times a day and massage it into the nails too."

Brands such as The Body Shop, L'Occitane, Innisfree, Kimirica, and many more have introduced hand creams to tackle dryness and help moisture, caused due to daily errands. Just like skincare, it is necessary to include chemical acids, exfoliators, and sunscreen into your hand grooming routine. "Ingredients such as ceramides, mango butter, glycerine, niacinamide, and dimethicone are recommended for hands. Use a mild gentle chemical exfoliant containing lactic acid or glycolic acid once a week for your hands. Don't forget a broad-spectrum sunscreen when stepping out to prevent sun damage and early ageing," recommends Agarwal.

> *"Use a mild gentle chemical exfoliant containing lactic acid or glycolic acid once a week for your hands. Don't forget a broad-spectrum sunscreen when stepping out to prevent sun damage and early ageing" — Dr Madhuri Agarwal*

Nails are an essential part of taking care of your hands, in fact, haven't we been taught about keeping our nails clean since we were kids with grubby, muddy nails? The nails can be kept hydrated by moisturising the skin folds surrounding the nails. "It's crucial to keep an eye out for changes in the nails, such as a change in colour, pits appearing over the nail plates, or roughness and crumbling of the nail plate so that a dermatologist can examine it to rule out any fungal infections or other nail disorders. Unhealthy nails could be because of dehydration, inadequate moisture, and nutritional deficiencies," explains Janet Alexander Castelino, founder of DermaZeal clinic.

Certain skin conditions such as psoriasis can manifest as pitting over the nails, while sometimes long periods of illness or stress could result in transverse deep grooves across the nails. Manicures can be beneficial to groom the nails and keep them short and clean. It is essential to keep the cuticles intact during a manicure, as they are present to prevent the ingress of infectious agents into the nail. Removing the cuticles would break this barrier, and can lead to infections, opines Castelino.

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Darshith Shivanagere, MD of Dessange Bangalore, recommends, "For starters, men shouldn't clip too low. They should smooth the edges and push out the cuticles. They should massage their hands regularly and remove dead cells."

Men should opt for manicures at least once a month. Usually, salons end the manicure with a transparent coat, and the demand for the same has been increasing in men. Whether to go for a fresh coat or not, it is up to you. "Fingernails are composed of laminated layers of a protein called keratin, which grows from the area at the base of the nail, under the cuticle. Healthy fingernails are smooth, without pits or grooves. They're uniform in colour, consistent, and free of spots or discolouration, if a person regularly gets a manicure done, it can help maintain healthy nails," adds Shivanagere.

A new introduction to maintaining healthy nails is oral supplements. Vitamin tablets and gummies have been on a rise for the past two years with brands such as Man Matters, The Derma Co., Power Gummies, OneLife, and others, introducing a variety of options.

"Supplements are required for nail health as regular food nutrition can be inadequate for them. At times, you may be consuming adequate food as per your understanding, however, it may not suffice the nail needs. Supplements providing micronutrients such as zinc, magnesium, and macronutrients such as vitamin B12, Vitamin C, omega 3 fatty acids, and amino acids should be included," recommends Agarwal.

So, what are you waiting for? Book that manicure appointment and pamper your hands — they deserve it.

SHUTTERSTOCK

WHAT MAKES CK DEFY THE ULTIMATE **FRAGRANCE OF '22**

Calvin Klein has expanded its fragrance portfolio by introducing Calvin Klein Defy Eau De Parfum, after the success of its Eau De Toilette, with actor Richard Madden shining in the fragrance's celebratory campaign

CALVIN KLEIN
DEFY

Calvin Klein's Eau De Toilette has been a raging success with CK fans as well as those who got introduced to the brand via the fragrance, but there's news for you. The fashion house has added another scent to its collection: Calvin Klein Defy Eau De Parfum.

Set against a blue twilight sky, the campaign starts with actor Richard Madden's self-reflecting and defying moments culminating in a courageous leap of faith, a symbolic metaphor for personal defiance and daring to take risks. Wearing the fashion house's famous jeans and signature white T-shirt, the Scottish star's eyes meet the camera with a rebellious look, while a landscape is blurred in the distance, and the powerful deep blue sky depicts the hues of the fragrance bottle.

Curated by senior perfumer Pascal Gaurin, the fragrance starts with a seductive leather note contrasted by exhilarating freshness. While encompassing the same woody signature as the original Eau de Toilette, this Eau de Parfum has a rather unexpected but welcoming warm and dark twist. The fragrance opens with a burst of citrus highlighted by Mandarin Oil. At the heart, an addictive Leather accord adds modern masculinity and builds extreme contrast to rich Vetiver Oil at the base. To reflect the fragrance's modernity, 80.6 per cent of ingredients are naturally sourced.

> *Housed in a luxurious bottle, the new packaging pays an ode to the uber cool heritage of Calvin Klein's design codes*

Housed in a luxurious bottle, the new packaging pays an ode to the uber cool heritage of Calvin Klein's design codes. A juxtaposition of opposing forces celebrating the two sides — vulnerable yet courageous — the bottle is symbolised by its curves and contrasted by sharp and powerful corners. A sophisticated coloured bottle in an intense navy blue gradient resembles the notes of the campaign's twilight, whereas the flacon is topped off with a textured matte blue cap inspired by Calvin Klein denim.

Calvin Klein CK Defy Eau De Parfum comes in 200ml, 100ml, and 50ml bottles, and now is available to shop online and in stores.

Winning The **Skincare Cold War**

Combat dry and flaky skin with this ultimate guide to winter skincare

By Radhika Agrawal

From dewy mornings, oversized jumpers, to a cup of hot cocoa, there's much to love about the snuggle season. But the drop in temperatures isn't quite as pleasant for our skin. Winter's bite can do a number on even the best groomed men. The skin's barrier becomes weaker with lower moisture levels in the air, which often leads to dry and irritated skin, flaky patches, rashes, cracks, and chapped lips.

"The lubricant level between the skin cells decreases in the winters. As the bonds between the skin cells or keratinocytes weaken, they are shed quicker," explains Dr. Manjot Marwah, celebrity dermatologist, hair transplant surgeon, consultant & director at Dr. Manjot's Clinic. The shedding of cells can cause your skin to feel itchy, and the more you scratch that itch, the flakier your skin becomes. Talk about a lose-lose.

> *While many associate sunscreens with beachy summer days, wearing SPF in the winters is a cardinal rule*

That's not to say that your skin is doomed for the entirety of the season. A well-rounded winter skincare routine can not only prevent but also reverse damage. All it needs is a little more time, attention, a few easy hacks, and some extra TLC from expert-approved products.

Because cold air traps pollutants for longer, the months from November to February witness higher air pollution. And so, cleansing your skin to get rid of dirt and grime becomes an imperative first step. "Make sure you don't wash your face too often or too vigorously though, as that can exacerbate acne," says Ravina Jain, founder & CEO, The Skin Story and The Beard Story. Using a gentle all-natural cleanser twice a day will do the trick.

Next up is moisturising — an essential skincare practice for healthy skin all through the year — and doubly important in the cold. However, lathering yourself with multiple layers of lotion will do you little good. "Use a nourished, lightweight moisturiser suited to your skin type shortly after showering to lock in your skin's moisture," says Jain. Look for a product that comes packed with ceramides and squalene, which are fats and lipids that help retain moisture in the skin. Another wintertime ritual that can rob your skin of its natural oils is — and we're sorry to be the bearers of bad news — hot showers. Because of the potential drying effects of hot water, Jain advises limiting the duration and temperature of your showers. If your skin continues to look dull and thirsty, it's also a good idea to increase your water intake during the day. "Be mindful of what you eat and drink. Excessive consumption of coffee or alcohol can further dehydrate your skin," says Dr. Marwah.

With a good moisturiser in your corner, you might be tempted to skip sun protection before heading out. While many associate sunscreens with beachy summer days, wearing SPF in the winters is a cardinal rule. "We see a rise in sunburns and pigmentation in chilly temperatures as people enjoy being out in the sun," Dr. Marwah explains. Your best bet is a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or more, which offers protection from harmful UVA and UVB rays.

Cozying up under the covers is a universal delight in cold weather, so we don't blame you for itching to hit the sack after a long day. But following a quick bedtime skincare routine can have noticeable results. If you're suffering from chapped lips, consider applying a sleeping lip mask to quicken the healing process. "This is also a great time to show some love to your heels and palms. You can choose creams with urea, lactic acid, and glycolic acid," says Dr. Marwah. And remember, when in doubt, moisturise, hydrate, and recover.

SHUTTERSTOCK

THE LOVE LIST

This wedding season, redirect your attention from the buffet to your own love life, and rekindle the romance with our round-up of the coolest experiences for couples

By Suman Mahfuz Quazi

A long-term relationship can be a lot like your go-to alcoholic drink — no matter how many pegs you're down, after a point, it just doesn't get you high. Or at least, not as much as a spiffy tequila shot or a highball. Come November, aka wedding season, and haggard couples are often getting ready to attend others' nuptials, entirely forgetting that it's likely also the anniversary season. It flows quite naturally, no?

But when you've spent years bickering over the kitchen sink, have slept on different beds because of an altercation stemming from grocery shopping, and have more than once taken a break from sex to throw the garbage out, keeping the fire burning can require some thinking. Thankfully, we're here to help you out. This season, we're not discouraging you from raiding the handloom cupboard to arrive at weddings dressed in your best. We're just saying, take out a few days to celebrate your own relationship, however old or new.

IN THE SHEETS

There's something rather comforting about checking into a luxe room and settling inside a cushy bed with an innerspring mattress with *tu amor*. From five-star properties to boutique hotels, getaways and staycations can veritably spice things up. Here are a few options:

SAFFRONSTAYS FORESTA

Nestled in Kamshet, Foresta is a six-bedroom property sprawled across 70 acres of land by the Andre Lake. The tranquil getaway has an outdoor pool, a dining room (with a bar), a Pinterest-y reading room, and a dining hall. There's also a gaming room, which is thoughtfully set up with billiards, card, and carrom tables, and a collection of board games. The lake is accessible through a short walk, and the staff offers to set up a cute little high tea on its banks. For couples, we would recommend the cottages with ensuite bathrooms instead of the villa stay. It's private and fun.

Ideal for: Couples in Mumbai and Pune

To book: Visit www.saffronstays.com

TAMARA, COORG

Luxury meets nature seamlessly at this getaway. Situated approximately 38 kms away from Madikeri town, Tamara Coorg is a gorgeous property offering the most magnificent views of the hills. Inside Tamara, you'll find recreation and fitness centres, a restaurant and bar, indoor and outdoor pools — the former of which is temperature controlled — and their Elevation Spa with a couples massage room (and private steam room, if you know what we mean). The resort also organises a panoply of experiences, including a plantation tour, short and long treks and their coffee-forward, Blossom-To-Brew experience in a bid to keep guests busy at the secluded stay.

Ideal for: Couples in Bengaluru, Mysore, Mangalore, and Kannur

To book: Visit thetamara.com

TOOTH MOUNTAIN FARMS, KARJAT

A short drive from the city, Tooth Mountain Farms is an idyllic spot spread across 20 acres in Karjat. For a couple, the bohemian-style suite rooms of the boutique farmstay is a good choice. The property also has a private man-made lake, pool, farm-to-table restaurant, an art village, and a plant nursery. A word of caution: if you want to binge-watch shows with your partner there, carry a device as the farm has only one TV set in the outhouse.

Ideal for: Couples in Mumbai and Pune

To book: Visit toothmountainfarms.com

AWAY SPA, W GOA

As the only W hotel in India, W Goa has always been a one-stop luxury hotel with unique offerings, and their rock pool has seen many a couple sip martinis at sunset. They have now launched Away Spa in the property, with the aim of helping you rejuvenate from your classic Goa ragers. From therapeutic treatments to dynamic massages, their couples' spa gives you total privacy and sets the mood with vivid colours, playful scents, imaginative sounds, energising light, and detoxifying potions. Your treatment room will have its own changing room, steam cabin, and shower, and also a music speaker that you can connect your phone to. Make it count.

Ideal for: Couples in Goa, Mumbai, Pune, and Bengaluru

To book: marriott.com

OUT AND ABOUT

Romance isn't one-size-fits-all. Often, couples find it better to connect and bond over while out and about, instead of being cooped up inside a duvet. Keep it simple and adventurous with these experiences:

THE BARGE COMPANY, KOLKATA

The sea has always been a symbol of romance, and the folks at The Barge Company are aware. The shipbuilding, inland water transport, and marine infrastructure player has recently ventured into luxury cruising and has barges suited for both large-scale parties and get-togethers, alongside intimate events that take place on the Hooghly River in Kolkata. For couples, they can make specific arrangements for candle-lit dinners and gourmet dining with coffee or caprioska, whatever may be your poison.

Ideal for: Couples in Kolkata

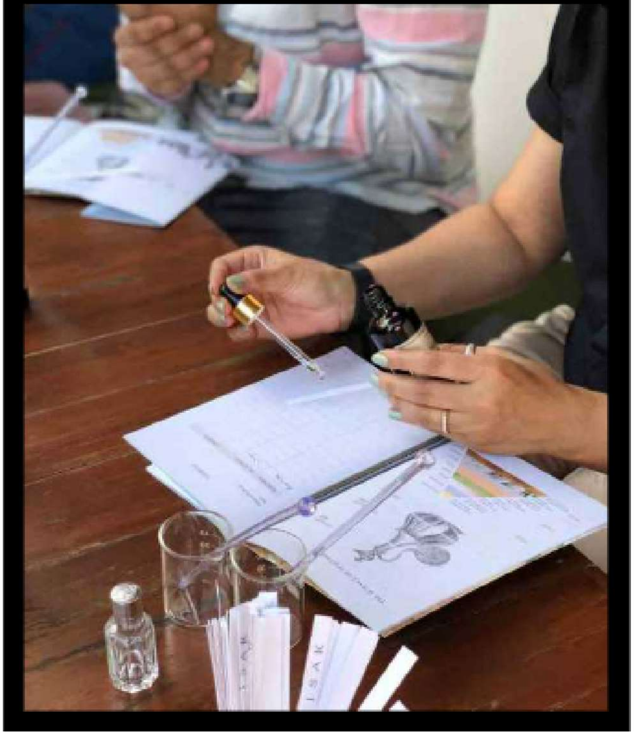
To book: Visit www.thebargecompany.com

TROVE EXPERIENCES

An event planning service, Trove Experiences curates experiences across segments, spanning activities such as artisanal perfume making, gourmet cookalongs, coffee and alcohol distillery tours, and even a wine and cheese tasting that they can set up inside the comfort of your home. Aside from this, they also have equestrian adventures, stargazing, horology, wildlife art, and sailing related plans.

Ideal for: Couples in Mumbai, Pune and Delhi

To book: Visit www.troveexperiences.com



GOA HANDPICKED

Whether you like sailing and yachting, kayaking, cycling or plain-old walking, Goa Handpicked is a platform where you can do it all. The organisation puts together offbeat experiences inside not-so-explored parts of Goa in a bid to highlight the untouched charm of the now overcrowded summer state. Give them a call, and they're happy to customise a day for you and your partner.

Ideal for: Couples in Goa, Mumbai, Pune, and Bengaluru

To book: Call on +91 9833438313

SET THE TABLE

Connections between food and sex have been made since times immemorial, because nothing can uplift the mood like good food and great tipples. Instead of booking a table at your favourite restaurant, up the ante by making use of these highly personalised F&B experiences.

OLEANDER FARM

A swanky property located in Karjat, Oleander Farms has multiple stay and dining options within its perimeter. Among all the experiences available, we're recommending their lakeside high tea as an ideal date set-up. A deli cart with nibbles, finger sandwiches, tea, and coffee will welcome you and the love of your life at this serene spot, equipped with a candle-lit table. Steal kisses as you subsume yourself in the verdant surroundings and the calm lake.

Ideal for: Couples in Mumbai and Pune

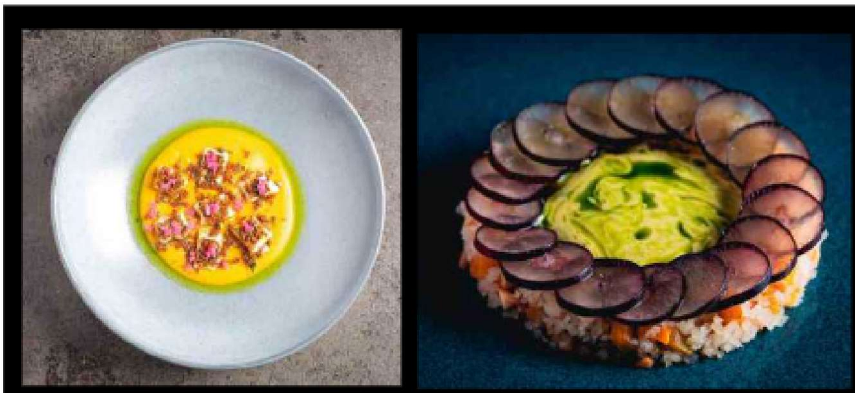
To book: Call on 022 50022222

THE LOVEFOOLS

Wine and dine in style at The Lovefools, a hidden gem inside Bandra's quaint Ranwar Village that's best known for its private and customised dinners. Pre-book the experience and tuck into their course-wise menus, which feature global eats. Set inside a heritage villa, it is a good spot for a unique date night or brunch — whatever floats your boat.

Ideal for: Couples in Mumbai

To book: Call on +91 9820203360



ARAGMA FOOD STUDIO

A multi-dimensional space for food experiences, Aragma specialises in interactive cookalongs and multi-course tasting menus, where couples can learn to cook their own food via a hands-on session, followed by a sit-down dinner, or enjoy a tasting menu featuring Indian-inspired dishes made with local ingredients. Take your pick.

Ideal for: Couples in Pune

To book: Call on +91 8484804201

Pack The Passion

YOUR HEART
I WILL CHOOSE

Looking to spruce things up in bed while on your staycay/getaway? Pack these bedroom essentials, preferably in the check-in luggage. You don't want to clarify what it is to airport personnel at security check in.

The **My Muse Pulse Massager** is a sleek-looking full body massager, complete with a pouch, charger and instruction manual.

Oye Happy's Dice and Spice is a fun little board game with risque challenges and dares designed to keep you and your lover up all night.

Hotels In Your City

The Westin Powai Lake, Mumbai

Pullman Aerocity, Delhi

Conrad, Bengaluru

Ritz Carlton, Pune

ITC Royal Bengal, Kolkata

ALL ABOUT FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

As the quadrennial sporting extravaganza will kick off on November 20, more than five billion people from every nook and corner of this planet are expected to tune in to watch it. For the next month, football will be seen, heard, and talked about everywhere. We at *MW* present you with a special World Cup edition to warm you up for the event. We start with a preview of the defending champion France, exploring whether they can emulate the highs of 2018 once again in Qatar. Staying true to global nature of football, we move to South America, where two of the most storied national teams will be aiming to snap Europe's dominance at this event. After Brazil's triumph in 2002, the next four World Cup titles have been swept by Italy, Spain, Germany, and France. Can Brazil and Argentina buck the trend? Of course, no storyline will be complete without the mention of Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, but a new world order is not far away, given how both stars have entered the dusk of their storied careers. Can they lay hand on the Jules Rimet Trophy? We sign off our coverage with an extensive guide on players you should watch out for, players who will be playing their last World Cup, and high-profile players who will be sorely missed in Qatar.

Happy reading.

Stories by: Ravi Raj

Will Didier Deschamps' France Successfully Defend Their World Cup Title in Qatar?

A series of injuries, thanks to a jam-packed season this year, has resulted in a severe loss of cohesion in the midfield and attack line-up of the reigning world champions. English bookies are still placing them as the third most favourite to win the title, after Brazil and Argentina. But will they?

WORLD CUP FINAL

GETTY IMAGES

For France to successfully defend their World Cup title, they will need to do something that none of the European teams had done so far in the 21st century — to avoid being relegated from the group stage after winning the title four years ago. The trend was started by none but France when they were crowned as World Cup champions for the first time in 1998, but they suffered a humiliating first-round exit in the 2002 World Cup. Since then, Italy (Champions 2006), Spain (Champions 2010), and Germany (Champions 2014) have suffered a similar fate.

Can Didier Deschamps buck the trend this time and mastermind one last hurrah before the team undergoes an awaited transition? They have a deep reservoir of the talent pool, their players feature for elite teams in elite leagues, and are accustomed to soaking up the pressure of high-octane games. Beating Australia and Tunisia should be a cakewalk for them. The only real bump in the group stage seems to be Denmark.

But the same could have been said for this year's UEFA Nations League, where they were pooled alongside Croatia, Austria, and Denmark. Theoretically, France should have qualified without much hassle, but they ended the tournament with three defeats, two draws, and just one win. The underwhelming campaign laid bare the vulnerabilities of this French team, leaving Deschamps with more questions than answers.

The high-flying team of 2018 was built more on the individual brilliance and less on the tactical acumen of Deschamps. A series of injuries, thanks to a jam-packed season,

Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kanté

seem to have blighted that cutting edge, resulting in the severe loss of cohesion in the midfield and attack. N'Golo Kanté, who was the lynchpin of their midfield, is ruled out due to injury. Kanté put up a clinical show last time, winning 2.21 tackles and intercepting 3.33 passes per ninety minutes last year.

> ***It's not that the team lacks depth. Deschamps is blessed with a covetous talent pool, but he doesn't yet know what the perfect blend of fresh blood and seasoned footballers would look like***

His commanding presence allowed Paul Pogba to prosper in the advanced role, without worrying about his defensive duties. Moreover, Pogba himself failed to recover in time, after hurting his knees at his new club Juventus before the European season began. Four years ago in Russia, Pogba was almost everywhere , covering the sprawling width of the pitch with his brawny physique and immaculate vision. Thus Deschamps will be bereft of two of his best midfielders in Qatar.

It's not that the team lacks depth. Deschamps is blessed with a covetous talent pool, but he doesn't yet know what the perfect blend of fresh blood and seasoned footballers would look like. Eduardo Camavinga and Aurélien Tchouaméni have already broken through at the club level, with both being identified as the future of Real Madrid in the post-Kroos-Modric era. They both have complimenting attributes, similar to Pogba and Kanté. But will Deschamps take a punt on a midfield duo whose combined age is just 42?

As the adage goes, you need old heads and young legs to win the World Cup. For Deschamps, another glaring issue is that the old heads haven't been able to put up an authoritative show in the build-up. "Raphaël Varane, the most experienced defender, hasn't yet fully recovered from the injury he sustained last month during Manchester United's trip to Stamford Bridg. He was not even in the squad for his club'w last game before the World Cup, against Fulham." Presnel Kimpembe, who paired up with Varane in 2018, hasn't had a great season with PSG. They have an array of young defenders like William Saliba of Arsenal, Ibrahima Konaté of Liverpool, and Jules Koundé of Barcelona, but none of them possesses the experience of playing on such a big stage.

There's a lot of uncertainty around this French side. But Deschamps will still take solace in the fact that he is not the only manager who will depart to Qatar with a dizzy vision of what their final XI will look like, and in what formation they would line up. If their ill-fated UEFA Nations League campaign is anything to go by, they would likely stack themselves in a 3-4-3 or its variant, 3-5-2. The formation adds an extra layer of defence that has looked shaky in the build-up, allowing them to accommodate Antoine Griezmann, Karim Benzema, and Kylian Mbappé.

In this system, which promises to be incredibly lethal on the counterattack, Griezmann plays a classic No. 10 role, just behind the striking duo Benzema and Mbappé. The only problem in this formation is the lack of a natural right-wing-back. Benjamin Pavard doesn't match the attacking ideas the position demands, forcing Deschamps to play a winger Kingsley Coman in an odd position.

But it shouldn't come as a surprise if Deschamps goes with the traditional 4-3-3 or a flat 4-4-2. Either way, these are just means to achieve the end. Neither the team nor fans would care if France stomps their opponents. Much of it will depend on how smartly and how quickly Deschamps comes up with solutions to the burning questions. Everything looks easy in retrospect. The real challenge would be to improvise on the go.

France 2022 World Cup Group Fixtures

Tuesday, November 22: France vs Australia – 19:00 (GMT)

Saturday, November 26: France vs Denmark – 16:00 (GMT)

Wednesday, November 30: Tunisia vs France – 15:00 (GMT)

Team Argentina

Can Brazil & Argentina Break Europe's World Cup Dominance?

Bookies are currently betting on the two South American giants to reach the World Cup finals in Qatar, with Brazil as the odds-on favourite. But will they live up to this promise, or disappoint their fans once again — something they have not done consistently for the last two decades?

It was the 2002 FIFA World Cup in Japan. In front of a raucous crowd in Yokohama, Ronaldo Nazário pounced upon a loose deflection from German goalkeeper Oliver Kahn and deposited the ball into the back of the net. Twelve minutes later, Ronaldo received the ball in the vicinity of the box, dribbled to his right, and fired a shot into the bottom corner to double the lead. No more goals were scored in the game, meaning Brazil won the FIFA World Cup for the record fifth time. Over two decades later, this remains the last time a non-European nation won the coveted prize.

it's hard to pinpoint the exact moment when the balance tilted away from South America, a continent that had been home to some of the most mesmerising footballers.

It happened gradually, then suddenly. It's not that they failed to catch up on a tactical front, for some of the most astute tacticians in global football hail from this region of the earth. It's more of a result of a force of the market, as the money and power are now concentrated in the hands of the abysmally low number of elite European clubs. The creamy layers of footballers, managers, scouts, and analysts — all of them are poached by the European clubs. At the very basic level, this obviously impacts the cohesion and chemistry of the national team.

From 1968 to 2002, the World Cup title alternated between South American and European nations, emblematic of the balance of power between these two continents. At the turn of the century, the balance was skewed, as the next four World Cups would be swept aside by the European giants. When Italy won in 2006, none of the South American teams even qualified for the semi-finals. Four years ago in Russia, it was again an all-European clash in the semi-finals, with France, Germany, England, and Croatia sealing their spots.

Brazil steamrolled every stumbling block on their way, winning 14 out of 17 matches to become the first South American nation to qualify for this year's World Cup. Their last defeat came over a year ago in the Copa America final, against Argentina. In their last six matches, Brazil have scored 22 goals and conceded just two. They are just not winning the game but winning it by a high margin.

They have a host of supremely skilled players for each position, and zeroing down to the final XI will be a puzzling task for the manager Tite. Both on form and on paper, the current squad is a big improvement from the one that competed in the last two editions of the tournament. Neymar, now 30, remains the poster boy of this team, and his renaissance in the Ligue 1 has come at the perfect time.

Having notched 13 goals and 11 assists in just 17 matches, Neymar is the most potent striker going around. He will be paired with Vinicius Jr, another wonderkid who has taken the world by a storm with his blistering sprints and sharp finishes. They also have Gabriel Martinelli, Raphinha, Antony, Lucas Paquetá, and Richarlison — all of them firing on all cylinders for their respective teams.

There's a problem of plenty in the midfield, with numerous in-form players fighting for two spots. Casemiro is a certain starter, but it remains to be seen who breaks in as the second man in the midfield. Fred put up a timely reminder with his recent performances, especially his imperious display against Tottenham, but he will face stiff competition from Bruno Guimarães and Fabinho.

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The only point of concern is their inexperience in playing against European opponents. With the onset of the pandemic, traveling was restricted, and as a result, Brazil hasn't been able to play much against European opponents. But given the firepower they possess; one would expect them to have readymade solutions for every tactical problem that comes their way. They are pooled alongside Serbia, Switzerland, and Cameroon.

For the majority of his illustrious career, it was Lionel Messi's job to inspire Argentina to another World Cup title. Then something changed of late, and now it feels the onus has shifted to the rest of his teammates — to give Messi the most fitting farewell that he deserves.

Lionel Messi and Rodrigo de Paul

Taking over the job that many big names refused, Lionel Scaloni has overseen a great transformation aftermath of the debacle of 2018. Under his leadership, Argentina broke their luckless run of losing six tournament finals by beating Brazil in the Copa America final last year. Scaloni has also acquired a cult status in his country, with both fans and players showing blind support for him.

The whole team is carefully curated to get the best out of Messi, who, even in the dusk of his career, remains the most creative outlet in the team. He will be teaming up with the relentless Lautaro Martinez and the young striker, Julián Álvarez.

The fitness of Angel di Maria remains a concern, but they will be pleased with the dramatic rise of Enzo Fernández at Benefica. Fernández seamlessly adapted to the demands of his new club and is now among the hottest properties in the transfer market. Leandro Paredes and Rodrigo de Paul add much-needed expertise to the midfield.

Argentina is on an unprecedented 35-match unbeaten streak, a run started after the semi-final defeat to Brazil in the 2019 Copa America. In terms of squad depth, they are a notch below Brazil and France, but their first choice XI is as good as any team in the tournament.

> ***When Italy won in 2006, none of the South American teams even qualified for the semi-finals. Four years ago in Russia, it was again an all-European clash in the semi-finals, with France, Germany, England, and Croatia sealing their spots***

Neymar and Richarlison

Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo

Lionel Messi & Cristiano Ronaldo: The Elusive Quest For A World Cup Title

The two greatest football players of this generation have every footballing silverware in their respective cupboards, except for the elusive World Cup. Qatar will be their last chance to break the jinx

Welcome to the fractured world of football. This is a world where disagreement means division, a world where no middle ground exists between reverence and desecration. The nuance is long dumped in favour of binary thinking. This is football disguised as ideology, where you're either with us or them. One such ideological conundrum that the game throws are whether winning the World Cup is an absolute requirement for great players to enter the pantheons of legend, whose inhabitants currently include the likes of Pele and Diego Maradona.

The question is now more relevant than ever, as two players who have captivated the world with their mesmerising skills for over a decade have now entered the twilight of their respective careers, and the upcoming World Cup in Qatar is going to be their last realistic attempt at claiming the most prized possession in the world of football. Yes, we are talking about Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo. Admittedly, reading out these two names separated by 'and' feels a bit disorientating. It is supposed to be Messi vs Ronaldo, as it has been for a better part of the 21st century.

But for all the antagonism they share — in their aesthetics, appearances, and style of play — one common feature that binds their careers is the lack of a World Cup trophy.

This is going to be their fifth World Cup appearance, and though it can be argued that they have passed their absurd peak, the fact that the tournament still revolves around them to some extent remains irrefutable. It also tells even a team sport like football is not immune to the individual conception of talents.

Over the years, the running theme of Messi and Ronaldo endeavouring to win the World Cup with their respective nations have attained a Sisyphean theme. Every World Cup after 2006, when both made

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> ***It's interesting how Ronaldo and Messi are treated on different parameters when it comes to the World Cup. For Messi, winning it represents the final expression of his godly talent. For Ronaldo, the World Cup will be a massive bonus***

their first appearance, there's a premonition among the fans that this is the year when dreams turn into reality. But the object in the dream is farther than they appear. We'll see both stalwarts starting from scratch in Qatar, in what seems to be their final chance to right the wrong.

Jorge Sampaoli, the former Argentina manager, wrote in his book that the World Cup is like a revolver in Messi's head, and "if doesn't win it, he's shot and killed." Sampoli's words provide us with a great insight into the sporting culture of a South American nation, where football has still retained its unifying, communitarian characteristics, and where individual heroics are not appreciated in full measure unless it brings something noble for the nation.

This is the baggage of expectations that Messi has been carrying since a very young age. The quest for international success hasn't been an easy road to walk on for a player who had a habit of making even the most ridiculous skill look easy on the field. It has left him broken, beaten, and damned. The continuous despair almost killed his desire, as a result, he announced his retirement after an agonising defeat in the Copa America final in 2016. Messi took a U-turn over his hastily taken retirement decision, only to go through under bout of disappointment two years later in Russia, when Argentina was outclassed by the eventual champion, France.

It's interesting how Ronaldo and Messi are treated on different parameters when it comes to the World Cup. For Messi, winning this trophy represents the final expression of his godly talent, a logical end to his storied career, and a must-needed artefact that will put him in the league of Maradona and Pele. For Ronaldo, the World Cup will be a massive bonus. It's not something that he is destined to achieve like Messi.

Much of this sentiment owes to the fact that Ronaldo is the first superstar in a country that doesn't have a long and consistent conveyor belt of talents. In contrast, the Argentine played in a team that had no dearth of players who had already established themselves in elite European leagues. For instance, in the 2014 World Cup, Messi shared the space with Sergio Aguero, Angel Di Maria, Pablo Zabaleta, and Gonzalo Higuain, while Ronaldo played with Raul Meireles, Hélder Postiga, and Fábio Coentrão.

Ronaldo didn't have a reference point in his country. He is the best that the peninsular empire had ever produced. Messi, meanwhile, had someone like Diego Maradona to emulate. Maradona won the World Cup in 1986, and for Messi to be counted in the same breath as him, he needs to win that thing.

Messi's treacherous international career has been a stark contrast to his smooth club career. There's not a single accolade that Messi doesn't possess at a club level, while on the international circuit, his first success came only last year when he won Copa America with a 1-0 win over Brazil. It was Argentina's first trophy since 1993. It can also be assumed as the start of something beautiful for Messi, as Argentina will be going into the World Cup as one of the favourites.

For a change, Portugal's squad depth is as good as anyone this time. They are showered with some supremely skilled players at every position. However, the biggest concern for them is Cristiano Ronaldo's form, as he is having a forgetful season at Manchester United. In whatever limited opportunities he got, he looked totally out of place. It's quite ironic that for all the years when he was in his heyday, Ronaldo didn't have the level of support from his teammates he desired, and now that when Portugal looks incredibly strong on paper, his own finishing prowess has waned.

Argentina Get Easy Group, Portugal Not So

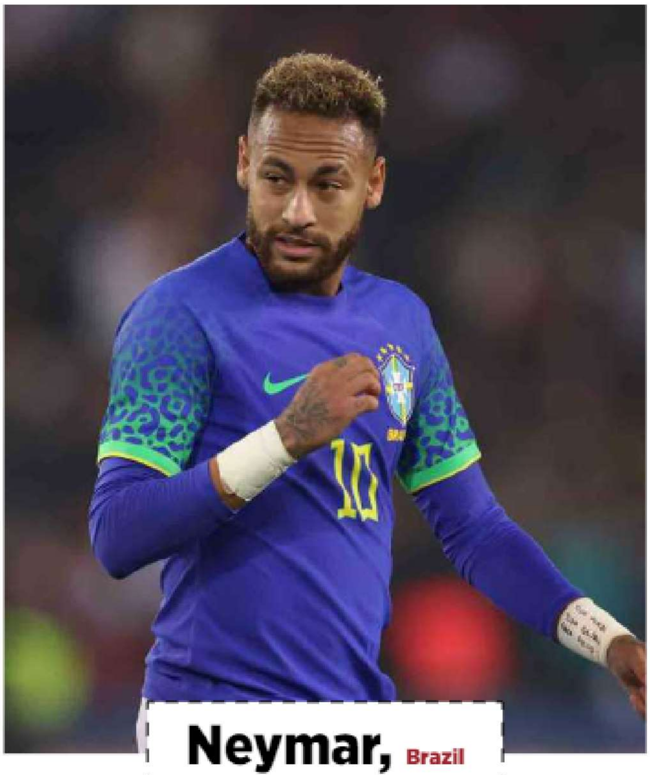
Lionel Messi's Argentina are pooled in an easy group, alongside Saudi Arabia, Mexico, and Poland. In contrast, Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal find themselves in a tricky group, comprising Ghana, South Korea, and Uruguay

Lionel Messi

TUGAL STAR
r o fu
Cristiano Ronaldo

10 Players To Watch Out For In Qatar

The FIFA World Cup 2022 will kickstart on November 20 with the host nation, Qatar, taking on Ecuador in the opening fixture. Since the tournament is being held in the middle of the 2022 football season, the jam-packed schedule has already ruled out many players due to injury. However, like every other World Cup, there will always be expectations about some players who one should keep an eye on. We list 10 such players, including the top six bookie favourites scoring the highest number of goals at the tournament



Neymar, Brazil

Neymar is striking all the right chords at the right time, having scored 11 goals, and providing nine assists for the PSG in the French Ligue 1. Despite all the media circus surrounding his theatrics, the Brazilian star has silently proved this season that he still remains one of the world's greatest — a thrilling, unpredictable footballing genius, a perfect man to build your team around. And there is no doubt that Brazil's World Cup campaign will be centred around him.

His famous back injury against Colombia in the quarter final match disrupted the seemingly perfect campaign for Brazil in their home World Cup in 2014. The country suffered a humiliating 7-1 humiliating defeat by Germany in the semi-final. Four years later, in Russia, he wasn't in the best shape, and came directly to the tournament after a three-month-long absence due to a fractured foot, and Brazil just about reached the quarterfinals. This time, though, he is in great shape, and will be coming off the back of an incredibly productive season with his club. Usually deployed at left wing by PSG coach Christophe Galtier, Neymar will be playing in a slightly different role for his country. "Neymar's role now is in that (inside) pocket just to the left, where he has greater space to construct, utilise his movement, and create. Out wide is no longer for him," Brazil's coach, Tite, was quoted saying recently.

Kevin de Bruyne, Belgium

Kevin de Bruyne will be shouldering a massive burden to justify the credentials of Belgium's golden generation. De Bruyne is widely hailed as the most technical midfielder in the world, and he will be the driving force for Roberto Martinez's unit that has failed to live up to its hype and expectations. It also seems to be the last chance for the Manchester City midfielder to achieve international acclaim, as most of the players surrounding him are now on the wrong side of their 30s.

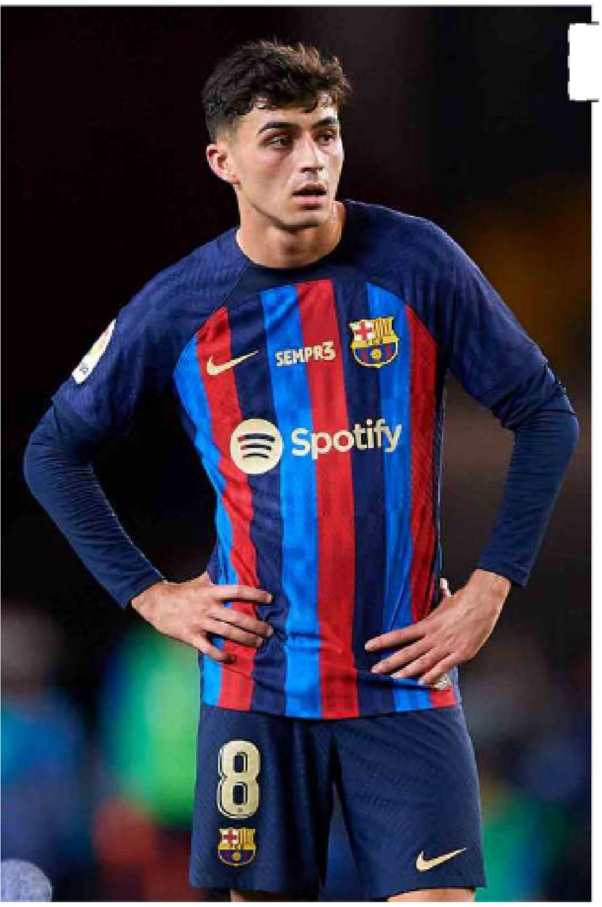
De Bruyne himself confessed that he is not sure whether he will be there for the next edition. He will continue to play in an advanced role, with Youri Tielemans and Alex Witsel sitting at the base of the midfield. The predatory vision of De Bruyne, coupled with an imperious link-play of Romelu Lukaku, will be the key for Belgium to split their opponent's defence. The only thing that they will dearly miss is the blistering pace of Eden Hazard, whose career has reached an impasse at Real Madrid.

GETTY IMAGES

Karim Benzema, Spain

Karim Benzema's long exile from the French team ended last year, when he was called up for the Euro 2021. Benzema is in the form of his life, and his impeccable goal-scoring prowess was one of the chief reasons why Real Madrid ended last season with both La Liga and Champions League titles.

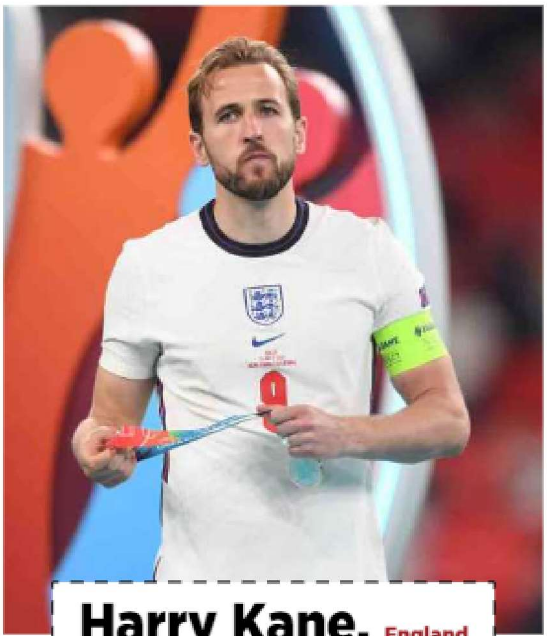
Last month in Paris, Benzema became only the second player other than Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo to lay his hands on the prestigious Ballon d'Or. However, the ongoing season has been marred by injury, and he has played just seven games so far. He recently missed the trip to Rayo Vallecano, where his team lost by 3-2.



Pedri, Spain

At 19, Pedri has already cemented himself as the most indispensable member of both his club, Barcelona, and his country, Spain. He continues to dominate the heart of midfield for his club with a vision and maturity that belies his age. Be it making a risky tackle to stop the counter, keeping position in a crowded space, making a line-breaking, incisive pass into the final third, or shooting from the distance — this baby-faced assassin has got all tricks in his bag, and he performs these with enviable ease.

Pedri has been a rare bright spot for Barcelona as they navigate through the gloomiest phase of their existence. Can he inspire Spain to defy the odds in Qatar? Well, a player alone never wins you the World Cup. Irrespective of how things unfold for Spain, watching Pedri run the midfield will be a pleasing experience. He is most likely to be paired alongside Gavi, who recently won the Kopa Trophy for the best young footballer of 2022.



Harry Kane, England

The spectre of a trophyless career must have started to haunt Harry Kane, who, despite being the most consistent striker in the Premier League, has failed to win a single major trophy in his career. Kane will turn 30 next year, and while the Premier League title seems to be a herculean task, he does have a chance to win the World Cup with England, or at least that's what the bookies believe. Kane is just a couple of goals away from levelling Wayne Rooney's record of being the highest goal-scorer for England. And bookies are even currently betting on him to be the highest goal scorer in Qatar.

Lionel Messi, Argentina

This is possibly the last chance for Lionel Messi to win the World Cup title that has eluded him so far. It also seems to be the best chance, given his team hasn't lost a single match in the last two years, and recently won Copa America — their first title since 1993. At 35, Messi still remains the most thrilling presence on the field in a team that also boast Neymar and Kylian Mbappe in the attacking three.

PSG manager Christophe Galtier has utilised him in his usual deep-lying playmaking role, and it has reaped rich rewards for both Messi and the club. He places himself just outside the box in between both flanks — a position also known as Zone 14 in analytic parlance. From here he uses his skill and guile to manipulate the defending space and find the marauding wingers — Neymar and Mbappe — on either side of him. He already has 10 assists to his name this season. At Argentina, Messi will be joined by the relentless Lautaro Martinez and the veteran Angel di Maria in the attacking unit.

Kylian Mbappe, France

For France to successfully defend their World Cup title, a lot will depend on how Kylian Mbappe fares in the tournament. At the club level, Mbappe's form has been nothing short of extraordinary, having scored 19 times in 20 appearances. But for France, he will not have the privilege of sharing the attacking space with the likes of Messi and Neymar.

Earlier this year, Mbappe confessed how the extra freedom that he enjoys for the national team brings the best out of him.

He even took a dig at the PSG hierarchy for restricting his movement and freedom by deploying him on the flank. Mbappe was involved in a tussle with his French soccer federation over the image rights issue. Many accused him of disrupting France's preparation just ahead of the World Cup. Mbappe will be itching to silence the critics with another brilliant campaign. But his efficacy will surely take a hit in the absence of N'Golo Kante and Paul Pogba.

Christian Pulisic, England

When England takes on the United States of America on November 26, all eyes will be on Christian Pulisic, the most recognisable American footballer with a point to prove. Pulisic plays for the English club Chelsea, where he was a bench warmer for most of the time under Thomas Tuchel's reign. The opportunities have come more frequently under the new coach Graham Potter, but certainly not as much as he would have liked.

The popular perception among English pundits is that Pulisic lacks the speed and ruthlessness to succeed in Premier League. However, this is far from the truth. For a brief phase under Frank Lampard's era, Pulisic was the liveliest attacker of the side before injury halted his progress. He hasn't got many opportunities since then, as the club also brought in Timo Werner and Kavi Havertz. He has all toolsets in his arsenal, but just seems to be low on confidence. The World Cup would be a great occasion to turn sceptics into believers.

Lisandro Martinez, Argentina

When Lisandro Martinez says he will "go to war" for Lionel Messi, he means it. He is a warrior in every possible scope of this word. He has already conquered the most important fight of his life — the fight with his own body. When Martinez arrived at Manchester United, the English pundits — a gift that keeps on giving — wrote him off even before his first match. Why? Because Martinez's diminutive stature will make him easy fodder for a physically dominating striker. What transpired after that is a stark contrast to the expectation or the lack of it.

Martinez is small but smart, and he makes up for his short stature with incredible anticipation, great positioning sense, and a well-timed tackle to disrupt the attack. In a Manchester United squad with a host of experienced defenders, it is Martinez who marshalls the defence, makes the last-ditch tackle, appreciates his colleagues, and regularly gets into the scuffle. He is one defender that everyone should watch out for in this World Cup.

Cristiano Ronaldo, Portugal

Cristiano Ronaldo is no longer the first-choice starter for the club, but he still remains the centre of attraction in Portugal. His finishing prowess is on the wane, but he can still conjure up a trick out of nowhere in crux situations. Since their agonising semi-final loss to Spain in 2006, Portugal has failed to advance beyond the Round of 16.

But this time, they definitely have a much better team, and they advance to the deep end of the World Cup. While it may be true that the strongest Portuguese XI will be the one devoid of Ronaldo, Fernando Santos is likely to take this unpopular decision. The presence of star players like Bernardo Silva, Bruno Fernandes, Ruben Neves, and Rafael Leao means that Ronaldo will not have to carry all the burden by himself.

5 Dark Horses Likely To Wreak Havoc On Fancied Teams

It is the unwritten logic of every FIFA World Cup that one or two of the least favoured teams will come up with unexpectedly great performances, preventing some of the pre-tournament favourites from advancing to the next round

Football, or any sports in general, hard-sells itself as a sealed meritocratic arena where every difference in terms of identity vanishes, and performance remains the only criteria of judgement. But the ubiquity of words like 'stunned' or 'upset' in sporting parlance tells you the contrasting reality. An explicit demarcation exists between traditional powerhouses and unfancied outsiders. If both teams were equal in every measure, what's there to be stunned about, say, Austria beating West Germany in the 1982 World Cup, Senegal beating France in the 2002 World Cup, or Croatia reaching the World Cup final four years ago?

The history of the World Cup is dotted with such odds-defying stories. While the names of potential World Cup winners are always on everyone's lips, here are five dark horses who can spring up a surprise in Qatar.

Denmark

Group D: France, Australia, Denmark, Tunisia

Current manager: Kasper Hjulmand

Star player: Christian Eriksen

It shouldn't be counted as an upset if Denmark trounces the defending champion France on November 26 at Stadium 974, since they have already done the same thing twice this year. The unfortunate collapse of Christian Eriksen last year still haunts the collective memory, but the team showed great resilience and unity to reach all the way to the semi-final of the tournament.

Many assumed that incident was the end of Eriksen's storied career, but the midfield maestro has not only revived his playing career, but also established himself as a pivotal member of Erik ten Hag's side. For Denmark, he will be paired with Tottenham's Pierre-Emile Højbjerg and Sevilla's Kasper Dolberg. Andreas Christensen and Simon Kjær form the sturdy backline ahead of goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel. While passing the first hurdle shouldn't be much of a hassle, a stern test awaits them in the Round of 16, where they may face high-flying Argentina.

Serbia

Group G: Brazil, Serbia, Switzerland, Cameroon

Current manager: Dragan Stojković

Star player: Aleksandar Mitrovic

Since attaining sovereignty in 2006, Serbia has featured in two World Cups and got knocked out of the first round on both occasions. But with a squad full of game-changers at their disposal, they would aim to break this luckless streak. They were in a scintillating form in the qualifying stage, winning six out of eight matches, including their 2-1 victory against Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal to top the group. They will be pleased with the current form of their all-time leading goal-scorer Aleksandar Mitrovic, who has already scored nine times in 12 appearances for Fulham. Mitrovic forms one-third of an attacking troika that also includes Juventus' young gun Dušan Vlahović, and the captain Dušan Tadić.

GETTY IMAGES

Senegal

Group A: Qatar, Ecuador, Senegal, Netherlands

Current manager: Aliou Cissé

Star player: Sadio Mané

Under the stewardship of Aliou Cissé, Senegal has taken massive strides in the last few years, winning their first-ever Africa Cup of Nation, and also qualifying for the World Cup for the second time in a row. Cissé knows a thing or two about beating fancy opponents, as he was a part of the entertaining Senegalese side that outsmarted France in their opening match of the 2002 World Cup.

Sadio Mane remains the focal point of the team that is brimming with confidence, and they have a three-man strong midfield in Idrissa Gueye, Pape Matar Sarr, and Nampalys Mendy. The only real question for them is the form of their goalkeeper Édouard Mendy, who has lost his status as the first-choice goalkeeper for his club Chelsea after a string of poor performances.

Wales

Group B: England, Iran, USA, Wales

Current manager: Rob Welsh

Star player: Gareth Bale

Led by the talismanic winger Gareth Bale, Wales has become the perennial team of dark horses, leaving their mark in every tournament they play. To everyone's surprise, Wales reached the semi-final of the Euro 2016, the round of 16 in Euro 2021, and finally managed to snap their long and arduous wait of playing their first World Cup since 1958. Bale has been the fulcrum of their renaissance, and it was his goal against Austria that secured their place in Qatar. The class of 2016 — Aaron Ramsey, Joe Allen, Ben Davies — might not be in their pomp now, but they still remain an integral part of Rob Welsh's side. The next-gen talents like Ethan Ampadu, Neco Williams, and Daniel James provide much-needed exuberance to the team.

If they advance beyond the group stage, which they should with such a well-balanced squad, the next rounds will set them up for potential clashes against Senegal and France.

Uruguay

Group H: Portugal, Uruguay, Ghana, South Korea

Current manager: Diego Alonso

Star player: Federico Valverde

For a nation with a population of just over three million, winning two World Cups — 1930 and 1950 — is nothing short of an extraordinary achievement. But the last decade or so hasn't been a smooth ride for the team, and four years ago in Russia, their journey came to an abrupt halt after losing to France in the round of 16. Uruguay is nobody's idea of World Cup favourites this time around, but the lack of expectations may very well work in their favour. Luis Suárez and Edinson Cavani are the attacking royalty of the team, managing a combined total of 126 goals in 265 games. But this is likely to be their last World Cup appearance. They already have the likes of Darwin Nunez and Federico Valverde to take over the mantle from Suárez and Cavani. With Roland Araújo's participation looking doubtful due to injury, the defence looks a bit shaky. But there's no dearth of attacking talent, and they go deep into the tournament.

Suárez, of course, will be the centre of attraction when Uruguay takes on Ghana in a Group H fixture, twelve years after the striker's notorious handball clearance at the goalline dashed the hopes of the African team.

The Big Names That Will Miss World Cup In Qatar

Either because of an untimely injury, or their country failed to qualify, the World Cup 2022 will be bereft of these star players

Erling Haaland

Norway

Erling Haaland, the most sought-after striker in the world, will not be seen in action in Qatar World Cup 2022. After leaving his mark in the Austrian League and Bundesliga, Haaland has taken the Premier League by storm, smashing 18 goals in just 12 appearances for Manchester City.

Despite scoring five goals in the qualifying round, Haaland failed to drive Norway to the marquee competition in Qatar, as they were edged out by Turkey, who claimed second place behind the Netherlands. Norway managed only one victory in the absence of Haaland in the final four games of the qualifiers.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic

Sweden

Earlier reports suggested that the legendary striker was considering international retirement for a while. However, he laid the speculations to rest, and pushed for a selection for Sweden. Sadly, though, even Ibrahimovic couldn't overturn the two-goal deficit inflicted by Poland in the play-off decider earlier this year in March. It was strange to see Sweden crashing out of the Qatar World Cup, given only four years ago they stunned everyone by beating the Netherlands in the qualifying fixture, and Germany in the group stage. By the time the 2026 World Cup begins, Zlatan will already be 45, thus it's fair to say that he won't be adding to his World Cup appearances.

Mohamed Salah

Egypt

In a repeat of the AFCON 2022 final, Mohamed Salah missed from the spot during a penalty shootout defeat against Senegal, meaning he won't be adding anything to his tally in Qatar. Losing to Senegal was a massive blow to both Salah and his Egyptian team, as they were desperate to redeem themselves in Qatar, after they failed to win even a single match in Russia World Cup 2018. It has been a topsy-turvy season for Salah after he renewed his contract with Liverpool before the beginning of this current season.

Riyad Mahrez

Algeria

Manchester City's winger Riyad Mahrez will be watching the action from the comfort of his home, after Algeria succumbed to an agonising 2-1 defeat to Cameroon, thanks to a last-minute winner from Karl Toko Ekambi. Algeria was crestfallen after the defeat which they pinned upon the "disgraceful refereeing". Algerian Federation's appeal for a rematch was rejected by FIFA. Provided Nigeria qualify for the next edition of the tournament, Mahrez, now 31, would back himself to break into the playing XI.

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Wilfried Zaha

Ivory Coast

Despite being instrumental for Crystal Palace for many years now, Wilfred Zaha failed to replicate his form for his national team. The Ivorian will be one of many famous names, including fellow countryman, Franck Kessie, to miss out on the upcoming competition. Ivory Coast surrendered the World Cup spot after losing out to Cameroon. Zaha made his international debut for England, but switched to play for his native country in 2017. However, he is now reconsidering his international career with Ivory Coast, requesting the team management to not pick him for international duty.

Marco Verratti

Italy

It can be argued that Marco Verratti is among the most underappreciated midfielder of our generation. Admittedly, it's quite natural for a player to go under the radar if he plays for a team that boast the most decorated attacking troika of an era — Lionel Messi, Kylian Mbappe, and Neymar. But there's no one to steal the limelight when Verratti plays for Italy, and his virtuosity in the midfield gets the recognition that it deserves. Verratti was the vital cog of Italy's Euro Cup-winning team, and he would have loved to emulate the same at a much bigger stage in Qatar. But Italy failed to qualify, after falling down to North Macedonia in the European playoffs.

N'Golo Kanté

France

France will be gutted to miss the service of N'Golo Kanté after the Chelsea midfielder was ruled out of action for four months because of a recurring hamstring injury. The last few years of Kanté's career have been dotted with injuries, and this season, he has played just 175 minutes of football. Kante played a crucial role in Les Bleus' World Cup-winning campaign, providing impeccable defensive solidity at the heart of the midfield which allowed Paul Pogba to play in a highly advanced role.

Paul Pogba

France

France suffered a massive dent in their hopes for the successful defence of the World Cup title after their talismanic midfielder Paul Pogba got ruled out due to injury. Pogba reunited with Juventus at the start of the season, but suffered a horrific knee injury even before the season began. He initially decided not to undergo surgery, but changed his mind last month. He played a pivotal role in France World Cup's winning campaign in 2018, also scoring in the final against Croatia.

End Of An Era: Ten Greats Who Will Bid Goodbye To The World Cup in Qatar

The World Cup 2022 will mark an end of an era for footballers who are already in the twilight of their careers. Here are 10 greats for whom the tournament in Qatar will be the last chance to claim the coveted Jules Rimet Trophy

Robert Lewandowski,

Poland

If there ever was a doubt about his ability to adapt outside his comfort zone of Bundesliga, Robert Lewandowski has buried it in the first few months of his first season at Barcelona. Lewandowski has carried his gluttonous appetite for the goal to Spain, but now it's time to replicate the same for Poland, whose campaign starts with a tricky fixture against Mexico. In the qualifiers, the Polish skipper led from the front, scoring nine goals. Lewandowski wasn't very upbeat about Poland's chance, stating that they are in a tough group, but vowed to put his best foot forward, and live up to the expectations of his countrymen. Now 35, he is likely to hang up his boots before the next edition of this tournament.

Cristiano Ronaldo, **Portugal**

The empire of Cristiano Ronaldo has reached the dusk of its sporting mortality. Even though Ronaldo has made a career out of defying odds, turning every adversity into opportunity, and doing things that the world told him he can't, it's hard to imagine him, or any sportsperson for that matter, beating the challenge thrown by the growing age. By the time the next World Cup arrives, he will be 41 — the age at which it's easier to imagine him chilling and basking in the glory of his legendary career rather than pushing for the Jules Rimet Trophy with Portugal. Ronaldo will be walking into his retirement with the record for scoring the most number of goals in men's international football.

Lionel Messi, Argentina

In many ways, the career of Lionel Messi has been intertwined with that of his arch-nemesis, Cristiano Ronaldo. Even though he is a couple of years younger than the Portuguese, Messi is unlikely to challenge for another World Cup after this one. "This will be my last World Cup, for sure. The decision has been made," said Messi in his recent interview. There's an unreal sense of solidarity among his Argentine teammates to give him the farewell he sorely deserves — to win the whole thing in Qatar. Messi will head into the tournament on the back of a scintillating performance with PSG, where he has been their main man of the attacking outlet. Argentina is placed in a relatively gentle Group C, alongside Poland, Saudi Arabia, and Mexico.

Luis Suárez, Uruguay

It will be life coming in full circle for Luis Suárez when he steps out in November for a match against Ghana — the opponent that was on the receiving end of his cynical handball in the semi-finals of the 2010 World Cup. In between these 12 years, Suárez conquered the world of football with his predatory instinct, pairing up with Lionel Messi at his dream club Barcelona to form the most lethal attacking partnership of the era. After leaving Atletico Madrid this year, Suárez made an emotional return to his boyhood club Nacional. The striking skills that made him one of the best in the world have faded now, and one can imagine Suárez pulling down the curtains on his international career as soon as Uruguay's campaign ends in Qatar.

Luka Modrić, Croatia

The World Cup in Qatar might be the last international tournament to witness the unassuming grace and beauty of Lukita, as he is fondly called. Modric was the driving force behind Croatia's high-flying juggernaut that came to a halt only before crossing the one last hurdle. There's a case to be made that Modric's game has only got more refined in the four years since that agonising night in Moscow where his team lost to France in the World Cup final. Nothing proves this conjecture more than the fact that he still plays for Real Madrid, a club that doesn't hesitate a bit in selling off the waning force.

GETTY IMAGES

Karim Benzema,

France

Karim Benzema was rewarded with his first Ballon d'Or for his brilliant season with Real Madrid, as they swept both the La Liga and Champions League titles. His scintillating form forced the French team to end his six-year-long hiatus, which was imposed back in 2015 because of his involvement in a sex-tape scandal. The regret of not contributing to Les Bleus' World Cup-winning campaign in 2018 must be there, but he wishes to change that in Qatar. If France managed to successfully defend their title, Benzema will become the first player in history to hold the Ballon d'Or and World Cup trophy at the same time. He will also be playing his last World Cup, given France await a transition period after that tournament, and he will have to make way for the young generation.

Gareth Bale, Wales

Gareth Bale's club career hasn't panned out as he would have liked, and at 33, he is playing far away from the limelight of European football. But even when his club career was falling apart at Real Madrid, he remained an indispensable member of his country. His impeccable performance in the qualifiers is the major reason why Wales qualified for the marquee tournament for the first time in over six decades. In what was a must-win match against Ukraine, Bale rose up to the occasion and scored the only goal of the match to seal a World Cup berth for Wales.

Manuel Neuer,

Germany

At 36, Manuel Neuer still remains the first-choice goalkeeper for his club and country. Neuer was sidelined for over a month due to a shoulder injury, but Bayern Munich's coach Julian Nagelsmann has confirmed his recovery, and he will be playing for Germany in World Cup. Neuer played an instrumental role in Germany's World Cup 2014 triumph, winning the Golden Glove award. He is not just a great shot-stopper but also helps his team in the build-up with his impressive ball-playing ability. He is single-handedly responsible for reviving the dying art of keeper-sweeping in the modern game.

Sergio Busquets, Spain

The metronome of Barcelona and Spain, Sergio Busquets, 34, have reached the final episode of his career. After Pique announced his shocking retirement earlier this month, Busquets remains the only player from the class of 2010 who will be going to Qatar. He provides much-needed expertise to a relatively young Luis Enrique's unit. Though he will have to fight with his most natural replacement in Manchester City's Rodri for a place in the first-choice XI, he remains an integral part of the team. Busquets's contract with his boyhood club Barcelona will come to an end next season, and it remains to be seen whether he continues to pursue football elsewhere or hang up his boots. He is already a club legend, winning 8 La Liga titles, 7 Copa del Rey titles, 3 UEFA Champions Leagues.

Thiago Silva, Brazil

Thiago Silva has been the epitome of control for an otherwise brittle backline of Chelsea this season. When Chelsea signed the Brazilian defender last season, not many were optimistic about the prospect of an ageing defender adapting to the frenetic nature of the Premier League. But Silva showed that he is not a one-trick pony, and his impeccable presence at the back convinced the club to give him a contract extension this year. Silva, now 38, is as crucial for his country as his club. He would love to sign off with a World Cup title in Qatar.

Old Horses In World Cup 2022

Atiba Hutchinson
Canada
39 years 9 months

Eiji Kawashima
Japan
39 years 8 months

Dani Alves
Brazil
39 years 6 months

Thiago Silva
Brazil
38 years 2 months

Cristiano Ronaldo
Portugal
37 years 9 months

5 THINGS TO DO IN QATAR DURING FIFA WORLD CUP 2022

As Qatar gets ready to host the FIFA World Cup 2022, tourism has seen a total upgrade in terms of restaurants, cultural hotspots, and activities that are worth indulging in when you're between matches. Here's everything you need to know about exploring the destination

By Samreen Tungekar

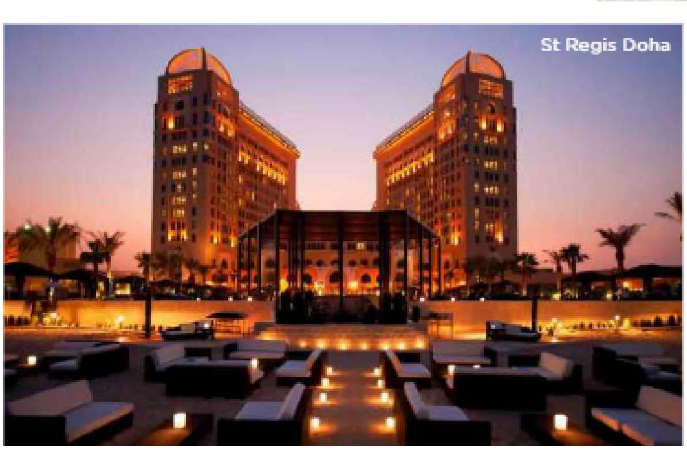
Like other destinations in the Middle East, Qatar might not jump out of the page as an out-and-out vacation destination. In fact, it is often treated as a 'stopover'. Qatar is hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022, a first for the country, and they've left no stone unturned to make sure there's enough and more to experience beyond football. So if you've booked your tickets for the matches and are now in the 'Google what to do in Qatar mode', look no further. There's an appropriate amount of bustle, city culture, beaches, and yet, a sense of calm as life goes on — it's definitely a destination to explore. From where to stay, eat, and what to do and see, we got you covered.

Stay in the most luxurious hotels

I open my balcony at the Ritz-Carlton Doha to the view of the Doha skyline — blue shades of the Arabian Gulf take your breath away during the day, while city lights shine bright at night. This luxury property deems fit as a comfort stay option, and the hotel has rooms and suites with the city, sea, or pool view, so take your pick.

For gourmands, another luxury stay choice is The St. Regis Doha — the hotel houses the contemporary Chinese restaurant, Hakkasan. A new hotel that has opened this year is Le Royal Méridien Doha in Lusail and the Katara Towers are also said to soon see Fairmont Doha and Raffles Doha, while Andaz Doha is said to come up in the West Bay.

Ritz-Carlton Doha



St Regis Doha

Desert Falls Water And Adventure Park

Dune bashing

Get your adrenaline rush with these thrilling adventures

Did you know that Qatar's wind is suitable for kitesurfing? Fuwairit Kite Surfing Beach Resort, a first of its kind resort in Qatar. It is an hour and 20 minutes north of Doha by road, and while kitesurfing is its highlight, you can also try turtle hatching, paddle boarding, and other water sports.

If camping is your idea of fun, Umm Bab, also known as the Palm Tree Beach on Qatar's western coast, makes for a great camping destination. Most matches are in the evening, so another way to make good use of your day is to go dune bashing in Khor Al Udaid (pick a tour, doing it by yourself is not recommended).

A rides and slides kind of person? Qatar's Desert Falls Water And Adventure Park is meant for you. A whopping 57,000 square metre park at the heart of Salwa Beach with over 56 rides and 18 attractions — for both kids and adults — it's one of the largest theme parks in the entire Middle East. Head for go-karting on the desert street circuit, or explore the first man-made canyoning adventure in the Middle East (also only the third of its kind in the world). Yes, lots of fun things to do.

Fuwairit Kite
Surfing Resort

Saasna

Parisa

Eat and explore different cuisines, Qatari delights, and food of countries playing the game

Essentially, Arabic food is what Qatari cuisine is made of, but the souq (market) has everything from Ethiopian, Turkish, Georgian cuisines to Iraqi, Pakistani, European options —so for no meal will you have to repeat a cuisine.

I stumble upon Nakhchivan, a two-storey, intimate restaurant with a menu serving different Arabic delights as well as a separate list of authentic Azerbaijani dishes. Start with the Moutabel, a Middle Eastern dip made using eggplant and olive oil. For a hot appetiser, try the gutab with cheese — Azerbaijani style lavash with hard cheese and herbs. However, the king of the meal here is the Shah Pilaf, a pilaf made by baking it inside a lavash that you then cut into like a cake (essentially served at weddings to keep the food hot).

For a luxurious Levantine meal, as well as a stunning view of Katara south hills, head to Bayt El Talleh in the Katara Cultural Village. Trying some Qatari food is obvious, so head to Msheireb to eat at Saasna — their specials, especially, are worth checking out. My favourite thing about all meals in the Middle East is that it's perfectly acceptable to end the meal with coffee — and I take a swig of Turkish coffee with a couple of dates thrice a day, unapologetically.

Doha is highlighting international dining options featuring cuisines from nations competing at FIFA according to the groups of countries playing. An example: If it's group B, which is England, Iran, USA, and Wales, then those supporting England can stop by The Red Lion Doha for a traditional pub-like atmosphere and watch the matches. For Iran, Parisa in Souq Waqif is the ideal place. American food lovers can head to Boston's, Ted's American Diners, Applebee's, Public House Doha among other options. Those in favour of Wales can go to STK Doha. Food in Qatar especially during football season is an adventure in itself, clearly.

Bayt El Talleh Restaurant
in Katara Hills

The Dhow cruise is a great way to see Doha's skyline

Souq Waqif

Explore art and culture offerings

For art, culture, and discoverers of art and culture on foot, there's so much character in all of Qatar's offerings. Head to Souq Waqif for a long stroll and a cuppa, and check out this market with its many shops, tiny establishments, and its alleys — believe me, it's quite an intriguing space. In the same is the falcon souq (the national bird of Qatar), where you can see falcons, and even hold one, or just buy some souvenirs. Souq Waqif has enough spots to pick a Qatari dress, local handicrafts, spices, perfumes, or chocolates. Don't miss the Arabic coffee carts, they will remind you of our precious cutting chai, with their small paper cups of coffee.

While that's on foot, you can take a cruise and see Doha's skyline by taking the traditional Dhow boat through the waters of the Arabian Gulf — and see all the stunning views of Doha's major tourist spots while enjoying some refreshments and music. Very gramworthy.

Next on the list is Museum of Islamic Art. Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning Chinese-American architect I. M. Pei, the museum has collections of over 14,000 years and three continents. The museum also has a café, and a restaurant by chef Alan Ducasse, and a heritage library with a collection of 21,000 books.

Even non-enthusiasts of sport will enjoy the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum, which is one of the world's most innovative sports museum. Almost all sports are represented via interactive exhibits, artefacts, and activity areas, showing how passionate the destination is about sports, and thus, connecting to why FIFA has finally gotten there. Pick up some cool FIFA merchandise here. Thank me later.

To pump up your day with a view like no other, take a morning stroll along the four-mile Corniche. Explore Msheireb Downtown (you can plan this for when you want to lunch at Saasna), get a cuppa at EL&N, and shop your favourite international brands at Msheireb Galleria. Head to Katara Cultural Village, and spend some time at the public beach where you can just sit and soak in the sun, or try speed boat rides, knee boarding, and water skiing. Take a walk at the Katara Hills and enjoy the view of the village and the sea beyond. Savour some karak chai and chapati, or head to Tasty Street boasts for bites on the go.

Heenat Salma

Sharq Village Hotel & Spa

COVID REGULATIONS

- India is no longer on the red list for Qatar, so it's 'visa on arrival' for Indians. However, hotel reservations need to be booked for the entire duration of stay with Discover Qatar

- For the duration of the FIFA World Cup 2022, there'll be no standard visas issued for the travel period between November 1, 2022 and January 23, 2023. Instead, you must have an approved Hayya Card to enter Qatar, it is an entry permit which you will also need to present at the stadium along with your match ticket. The Hayya Card can also be used to get access to free public transport

- Download the Ehteraz app — a Covid-19 tracing app — that you will be required to show to enter closed public spaces, such as hotels, malls, and restaurants

- The latest update on Covid tests is that Qatar has scrapped the mandatory pre-arrival RT PCR test for travellers from November 1, when Qatar will be closed to anyone without a Hayya card

Relax, unwind, repeat

Qatar has upped its luxury wellness quotient, and this is clear from the various wellness resorts and properties solely meant for luxe TLC. If you are staying at the Ritz-Carlton, the hotel's spa has a signature experience called the Desert Cooler, which uses cooling aromatherapy blends to help ease off the heat of Qatar. For an all-out wellness resort, head to Sharq Village & Spa. The resort has 23 treatment rooms and four spa areas, each inspired by an element of local heritage, add to that sauna and hammam rooms, and a private area just for ladies.

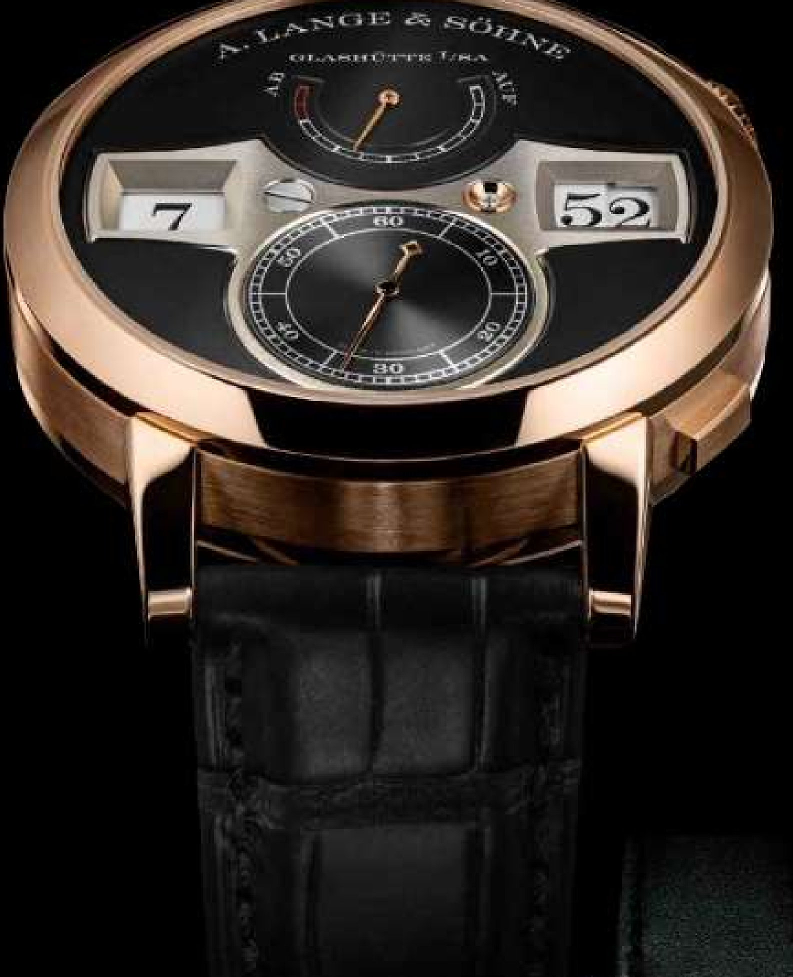
If your idea of wellness is connecting with nature, 30 minutes from Doha West Bay lies Heenat Salma, an eco-conscious farm that offers yoga and meditation workshops, as well as other more artful forms of therapy.

You may be headed there for football, but Qatar can be a vacay like no other. Sun, sea, sand, and the city, all choices are yours. What are you adding to your itinerary?

A (WATCH) YEAR IN REVIEW

Here's a roundup of some of the most exceptional timepieces that generated enough buzz in 2022. From scoring high on the design aspect, to displaying outstanding craftsmanship and supreme technical precision; these timekeepers stole the limelight with their horological savoir-faire

By Aishwarya Sati



A. LANGE & SÖHNE ZEITWERK

First presented in 2009, the A. Lange & Söhne Zeitwerk stood out for its avant-garde time display featuring large jumping numerals for the hours and minutes as well as a constant-force escapement as a beat controller. And the German watchmaker has continued to build-up on this masterpiece, which consists of a patented mechanism with three jumping-numerals discs, where the hours and minutes are displayed from left to right by large-format numerals that are 2.9mm high and 2.3mm wide. The new model featured here comes in a 42mm case, crafted entirely in 18K pink gold with a black dial that stands out against this framework. Apart from the jumping numerals, it also showcases a power reserve indicator at 12 o'clock and the subsidiary seconds with a stop-seconds mechanism positioned at 6 o'clock within a sub-dial. Thanks to the evolved Calibre L043.6 with seven patents, the timepiece now has a power reserve doubled to 72 hours, and when fully wound, the new Zeitwerk now has sufficient energy to perform 72 jumps with all three discs, 360 jumps with only two discs, and 3,888 jumps with only one disc. Another improvement versus the predecessor is the simplified setting of the hour. A pusher at 4 o'clock can now separately advance the display, which is particularly useful when the time zone changes. One simply has to press this and the display switches forward upon releasing it. However, the setting of the minute indication in both directions is still performed with the crown at 2 o'clock. This 451-part movement is visible on turning the watch over, thanks to the exhibition caseback through which one can admire the hand-engraved balance and escape-wheel cocks, the solarised winding wheels, the 59 jewels, and the intricate, straight-grained bridge that accommodates two recessed, screwed gold chatons. The watch is presented on a black leather strap that complements its overall sophisticated design aesthetic.

AUDEMARS PIGUET

AUDEMARS PIGUET ROYAL OAK PERPETUAL CALENDAR BLUE CERAMIC

One of the most iconic watches in the horology universe, the Royal Oak needs no introduction when one talks about haute horlogerie at its finest. Audemars Piguet has introduced a new version of its Royal Oak Perpetual Calendar — for the first time created entirely in blue ceramic. The signature Grande Tapisserie dial and sub-dials along with the ceramic bracelet are also in blue, displaying a monochromatic aesthetic that lends uniformity to this 41mm sporty timekeeper. The manufacture has used ceramic — an ultralight material, resistant to wear and scratches, with a slender construction measuring 9.5mm in thickness. They have implemented precise manufacturing of this material and meticulous hand-decorations to create this piece where each ceramic component has been given the same meticulous hand-finishes as they would in the case of precious metals. The blue-toned dial also features 18K white gold applied hour-markers and facetted hands, filled with luminescent coating for optimum visibility in the dark. The three calendar sub-dials at 12, 3 and 9 o'clock, are balanced by the moon-phase aperture at 6 o' clock, while granting optimum legibility of the hours, minutes, day, date, week, month, astronomical moon and leap year indication. At the heart of this timepiece lies the self-winding Calibre 5134, which carries out all these complex functions. This mechanism automatically takes into account the number of days in the month and correctly displays the prevailing date, even in leap years. Assuming the watch is kept regularly wound, the date will not require manual adjustment until 2100. Quite a feat! The movement measures just 4.3mm in thickness and is equipped with a 22k gold open-worked oscillating weight. This is visible through the transparent caseback where the bulkiest part of the rotor has been positioned towards the outer edge which is recessed within a channel encircling the movement, thereby reducing the height. Also, the choice of a suspended barrel has contributed to reducing the movement's thickness as well. Composed of 374 parts, it beats at a frequency of 19,800vph and offers a minimum power reserve of at least 40 hours.

ROYAL OAK
QUANTIEME PERPETUEL

BLANCPAIN
Fifty Fathoms

BLANCPAIN FIFTY FATHOMS BATHYSCAPHE FLYBACK CHRONOGRAPH

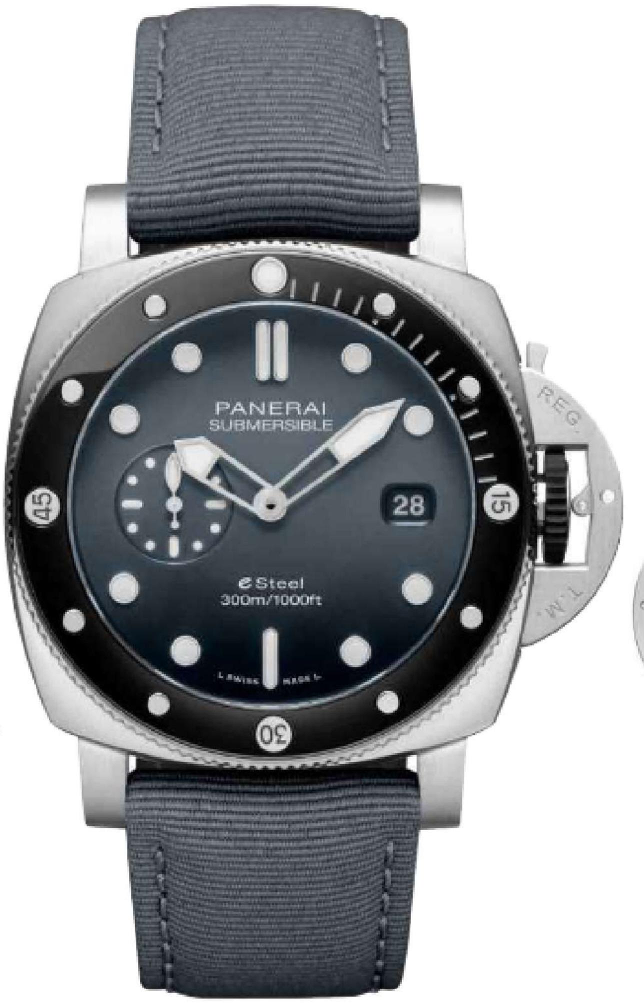
Blancpain has also revamped its Bathyscaphe Flyback Chronograph, which is now available in a 43mm grade-23 titanium case with an anthracite dial. Recently introduced into its collections by Blancpain, grade-23 titanium — also known as grade 5 ELI (extra low interstitials) — is the purest type of titanium available. It notably contains less oxygen than the standard titanium used in watchmaking. This reduction in the amount of oxygen improves the metal's resistance to breakage and corrosion. The watch is equipped with the in-house self-winding Calibre F385, featuring a flyback chronograph function. It measures 13-lignes and beats at a frequency of 36,000vph, and is equipped with a column-wheel chronograph mechanism and a vertical clutch. The flyback function enables the wearer to reset and instantly restart the chronograph, simply by pressing the pusher at 4 o'clock. Water-resistant to 300m, this dive timer is presented on a canvas strap.

OMEGA SPEEDMASTER CHRONO CHIME

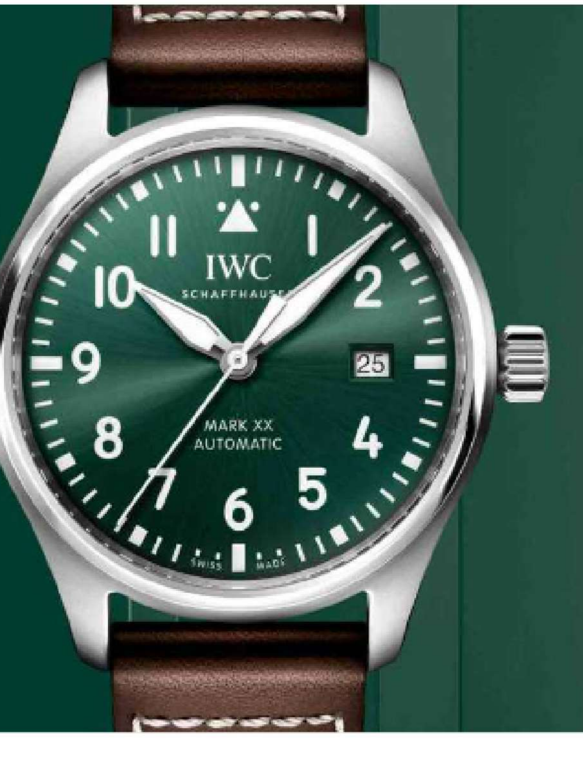
Omega has introduced the Olympic 1932 Chrono Chime — a tribute to the brand's glorious legacy of producing minute repeater wristwatches and pocket chronographs since 1892. Crafted entirely in 18K Sedna Gold, the watch has a grand feu enamel dial, graced with a silver hand made guilloche inner bezel and sub-dials. Another reason for crafting this watch in gold is because this precious metal is a good conductor of sound, imperative for a minute repeater. The central hour and minute hands, along with the sub-dial hands on the small seconds at 6 o'clock and 15-minute recorder at 12 o'clock — are all in gold with a blue PVD coating. It is powered by the brand's most complex movement till date — the Co-Axial Master Chronometer Calibre 1932. A fully-integrated chronograph and minute repeater, this movement has been produced not by layering, tinkering or fitting new parts to old, but by fusing both functions together in one powerhouse. Developed over six years, it operates at a standard frequency of 36,000vph to supply a power reserve of 60 hours, tracks 1/10th of a second, and is capable of withstanding external magnetic fields of 15,000 gauss, thanks to the use of 50 non-ferrous components. It's also entirely handmade and consists of at least 46.44 grams of gold, and the wearer can get a glimpse of this resplendent powerhouse through the exhibition caseback.

PANERAI QUARANTAQUATTRO eSTEEL GRIGIO ROCCIA

The Panerai Submersible QuarantaQuattro eSteel recognises the importance of sustainability goals while maintaining the brand's established design codes and technical finesse. Here, 72gm of the watch is made of recycled materials, corresponding to 52 percent of the total weight of the watch (137gm). The dial and bezel of the 44mm timepiece are in the same colour and are offered in three hues: blue, grey and green. They are all mounted on matching straps made from recycled material. The grey version or Grigio Roccia, looks elegant with its gradient dial with luminous hour markers and dots. There is a date window at 3 o'clock and a small seconds counter positioned at 9 o'clock. It is driven by Panerai's in-house P.900 automatic movement with a mere thickness of 4.2mm and a power reserve of three days. With a solid caseback, the timepiece offers a water-resistance of up to 300m, making it a certified dive timer.



PANERAI
AUTOMATIC DIVERS PROFESSIONAL
SUBMERSIBLE



IWC PILOT'S WATCH MARK XX

Known for their aviation watches, IWC has added stainless steel versions to complete their Mark XX line, which features models that hark back to the legendary Mark 11 — developed for the British Royal Air Force in 1948. The timepiece featured here comes with a green dial, framed by a robust and corrosion-resistant 40mm stainless steel case. The high-contrast dial with white numerals and indices displays the triangular index at 12 o'clock — a signature design detail of IWC's Pilot's watches. Luminous elements on the dial and the rhodium-plated hands ensure great legibility in all lighting conditions. There is also a rectangular date window at 3 o'clock. It is equipped with the IWC-manufactured 32111 calibre — an automatic movement that uses a bidirectional pawl-winding system to build up a power reserve of 120 hours. In addition, the front glass of the watch is specially secured against sudden drops in air pressure. Water-resistant to 100m, the timepiece is presented on a brown leather strap with a patented quick-change system, which allows the wearer to change the strap or bracelet without requiring any additional tools.

TAG HEUER FORMULA 1 CHRONOGRAPH

The Swiss player has added three new colourful variants to its popular Formula 1 collection. These new TAG Heuer chronograph models come in vibrant hues that are evocative of the racetrack: green, yellow, and red. These statement quartz sports watches authentically capture the spirit of the first TAG Heuer Formula 1 pieces from the 1980s, which were celebrated for their cool colours and sporty character.

They come in 43mm stainless steel cases with pushers at 2 and 4 o'clock, and a black PVD steel tachymeter-scale bezel with numerals. The screw-down steel caseback reveals a checkered flag motif, offering a water-resistance of up to 200m. Only the sub-dials are in black with the seconds counter at 3 o'clock, the 1/10th second counter at 6 o'clock, and the minute counter positioned at 9 o'clock. The angled date window is at 4 o'clock and the contrasting hands and indexes are coated with white Super-LumiNova for excellent legibility at high speed. All three versions come with matching rubber straps, corresponding to the dial hues.

ZENITH DEFY EXTREME FELIPE PANTONE

Zenith has once again partnered with renowned Argentinian-Spanish artist, Felipe Pantone to create a chromatic Defy Extreme numbered edition. Crafted entirely in mirror-polished stainless steel, the faceted lines of the new Defy Extreme Felipe Pantone timepiece incorporate transparency and colour, where least expected. The 45mm watch features a dial with sapphire elements that appear translucent and metallic. Colour gradients and the interplay of light and patterns are also an important aspect of this creation. It offers functions such as: hours and minutes in the centre; small seconds at 9 o'clock; 30-minute counter at 3 o'clock; 60-second counter at 6 o'clock; power-reserve indication at 12 o'clock. However, the 1/100th of a second chronograph function — where the central chronograph hand makes one turn each second — is the highlight here. This is enabled by Zenith's in-house El Primero 9004 movement, which features an efficient construction of two independently driven regulating organs, beating at 360,000vph (chronograph functions) and 36,000vph (timekeeping functions), ensuring that the use of the chronograph has no effect on the timekeeping precision of the watch. The open star-shaped oscillating weight is finished in the same gradient rainbow colour scheme as found on the dial. Limited to 100 pieces only, the watch is water-resistant to 200m, and is presented on a blue rubber strap or a steel bracelet.

BREITLING
1884
CHRONOMETER
CHRONOMAT

BREITLING CHRONOMAT AUTOMATIC GMT 40

The new Breitling Chronomat Automatic GMT 40 is ideal for avid travellers. With a case and bracelet crafted in stainless steel, the model featured here comes with an electric green dial that features a tone-on-tone 24-hour scale to let the red GMT hand stand out. It is powered by Breitling's Calibre 32, a self-winding mechanical movement beating at 28,800vph, with a 42-hour power reserve, and its COSC-certification guarantees supreme precision. The 24-hour scale lets the user track a second time zone and know at a glance reserve, and its COSC-certification guarantees (a classic Chronomat feature with its fluted dome shape) provides easy grip. With a solid caseback that offers water-resistance up to 200m, this all-purpose sports watch is also highly versatile and can be worn for a casual outing or in a formal setting.

SEIKO PROSPEX SPEEDTIMER SOLAR CHRONOGRAPH

First introduced in 1969, the Seiko Speedtimer was among the world's first automatic chronographs that offered exceptional reliability and precision. The Japanese watchmaker has introduced three new variants, whose design embodies the spirit of the original series but offer the added accuracy of Seiko's solar technology. The chronograph featured here comes in a 41.4mm stainless steel case and bracelet, and is water-resistant to 100m. The blue dial has a sunray finish with contrasting 'panda' sub-dials that feature a 24-hour counter at 3 o'clock, the 60-minute counter with power reserve indication at 6 o'clock, and the 60-second indication at 9 o'clock. It is topped by a bezel with a tachymeter scale. The date window is placed between the indexes so that the exact time can be read with ease. It is powered by Seiko's solar Calibre V192, which when fully charged, operates for up to six months. The combination of hairline and smooth finishes on the bracelet and the curved sapphire glass gives the timepiece a classic yet sporty look.

SEIKO
TACHYMETER

SUN 20 NOV
19:00
HUBLOT
SF
Q/F
3RD
F
ROUND OF 16
GROUP STAGE
DEC-NOV

TIMING EVERY MINUTE

Set with a new 'timeline' feature and a ton of dial colour options, Hublot unveils the new and improved Big Bang e FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 limited-edition connected watch

The 2022 FIFA World Cup, set to take place in Qatar, marks the fourth consecutive edition where Hublot is the Official Timekeeper. And to celebrate this important milestone, Hublot has unveiled its innovative new Gen 3 connected watch—the Big Bang e FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. This smartwatch will time all 64 games during the FIFA tournament, including the final at the Lusail Stadium in Doha on December 18. It will also be spotted on the wrists of the 129 official referees who will be monitoring all the games.

> *All set to time every minute of the prestigious event, the new Big Bang e FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 edition is equipped with an innovative 'timeline' function*

All set to time every minute of the prestigious event, the new Big Bang e FIFA edition is equipped with an innovative 'timeline' function. This feature takes fans of the world's largest football tournament right into the heart of the action, even before the match begins. How does it do that? With the help of a new design that displays a scale split into five sections, sitting at the outer edge of the dial. These sections indicate the first and second halves, and any additional time allowed in each half, and during half time. So, whenever any action takes place on the field, the watch will show a match event animation with all the details. For example, if a player scores a goal, then the watch will show an animation mentioning the player's name with a football symbol at the appropriate minute mark on the scale.

This function works for all other significant highlights of the match, like a penalty or a red or yellow card. Additionally, this feature automatically shifts into different gears according to the progression of the match. The watch display automatically switches to extra time mode if the game is extended beyond standard time of 90 minutes. And during a penalty shootout, each penalty is recorded by a football with a green or red outline. A final 'match period animation' with the final score is displayed when the game is over. While all this is happening, the user can replay these events during an ongoing game. All one has to do is scroll around the dial using the watch's crown on the case side at 3 o'clock.

The Big Bang e FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 is a Gen 3 connected watch and according to the brand is the 'highest performing Big Bang e to date'. It is available in a 44mm case made from micro-blasted and polished black ceramic and black titanium, and is water-resistant to 30m. Its impressive hardware specification includes an accelerometer, a gyroscope, a microphone, speakers, GPS, and a heart-rate monitor. Hublot's new offering is driven by the state-of-the-art Qualcomm Snapdragon Wear 4100 processor, powering the Wear OS 3.0 Google operating system. One of the most impressive features of the watch is its in-depth association with every glorious game moment. The large, improved, high-definition screen and a newly designed dedicated football app help capture every tournament moment.

SUN 20 NOV
19:00

The Big Bang e FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 also houses many modes that allow the wearer to feast on every tournament detail, that too, from the comfort of their wrists! In terms of battery backup, the connected watch comes with a promise of all-day battery life and a two-hour charge to full from empty. Limited to just 1,000 pieces, the watch can be personalised, thanks to various dial options available to the wearer via its accompanying smartphone app. The official version comes in a deep burgundy dial presented on a black-and-burgundy lined rubber strap, inspired by the rich hues of Qatar's flag. Fans can also choose the dial and strap designs in the colours of each of the 32 participating countries.

BOOKEND / THE SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE

Rashmika Mandanna

What Rashmika Mandanna's Instagram says about her

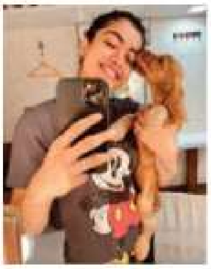
MANDANNA'S LIST OF CO-ACTORS IS PRETTY STAR-STUDDED, AND SHE LOVES FEATURING THEM ON HER FEED

Breezy, chic and always glamorous, the *Pushpa* star's wardrobe is quite classy

The actor believes in working hard, but always having fun while she's at it. Her pictures from the sets are proof

She gives her fans a sneak peek into life beyond movies by posting pictures with her loved ones

A TRUE PET MOM, SHE TAKES HER FURRY BABY EVERYWHERE, EVEN ON SHOOTS



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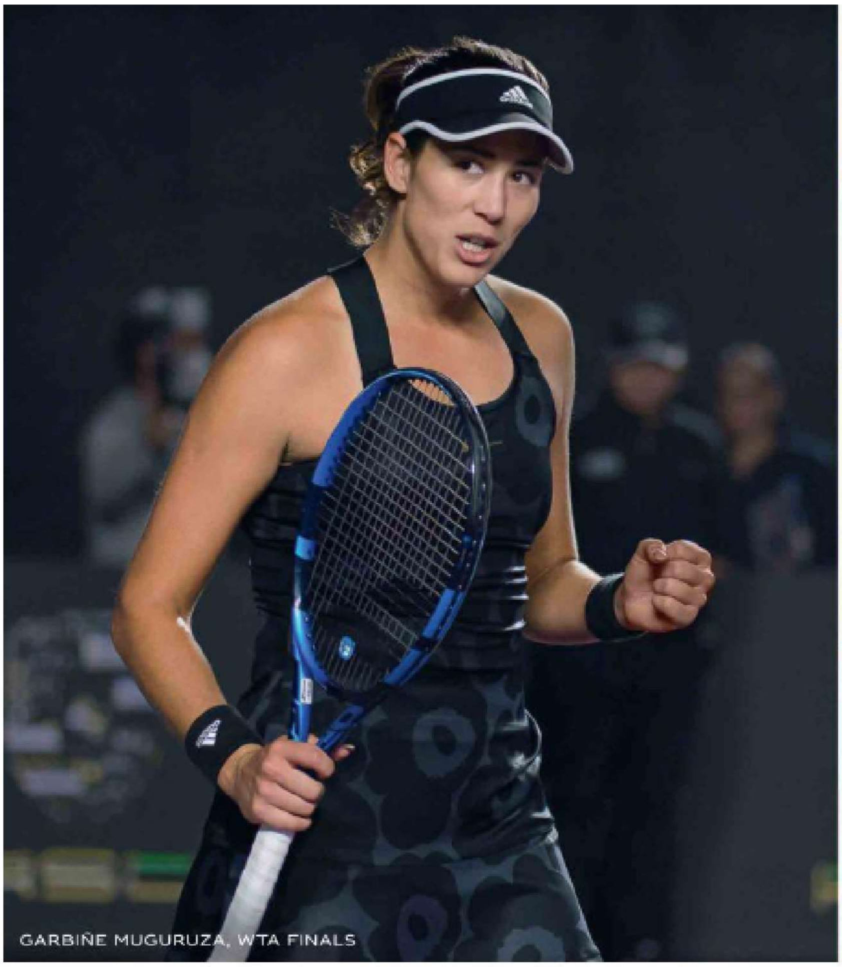
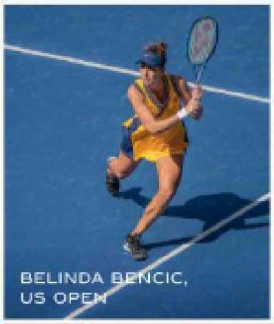
*Source: Futuresource Consulting. ¹World's No.1, 17 years running. ²India's No.1, 7 years running.



GARBIÑE MUGURUZA, WTA FINALS

JANNIK SINNER, AUSTRALIAN OPEN



BELINDA BENCIC,
US OPEN

SLOANE STEPHENS,
THE CHAMPIONSHIPS,
WIMBLEDON

STEFANOS TSITSIPAS,
ROLAND-GARROS

OYSTER PERPETUAL 36

WHAT ARE
THEY FACING?

Like any special game, tennis is not about what the players are chasing after. It is about what they must face along the way. Wimbledon or Roland-Garros, the US Open or the Australian Open... When they tread these monumental grounds, they're not only dubbed by the most revered institutions or galvanized by the roar of the arenas. They're also facing the unforgiving surface, the traditions of the venues, and the eye of connoisseur crowds. But even the epic games that have been played there and the legends they have forged, even the seasoned champion or feisty newcomer that keeps returning their best shots won't provide the true measure of the challenge. This is a game of resilience and elegance, patience and panache, power and heart. But moreover, it's a game where all players are facing a mirror. **And trying their very best to outdo none other than themselves.**

#Perpetual

ROLEX